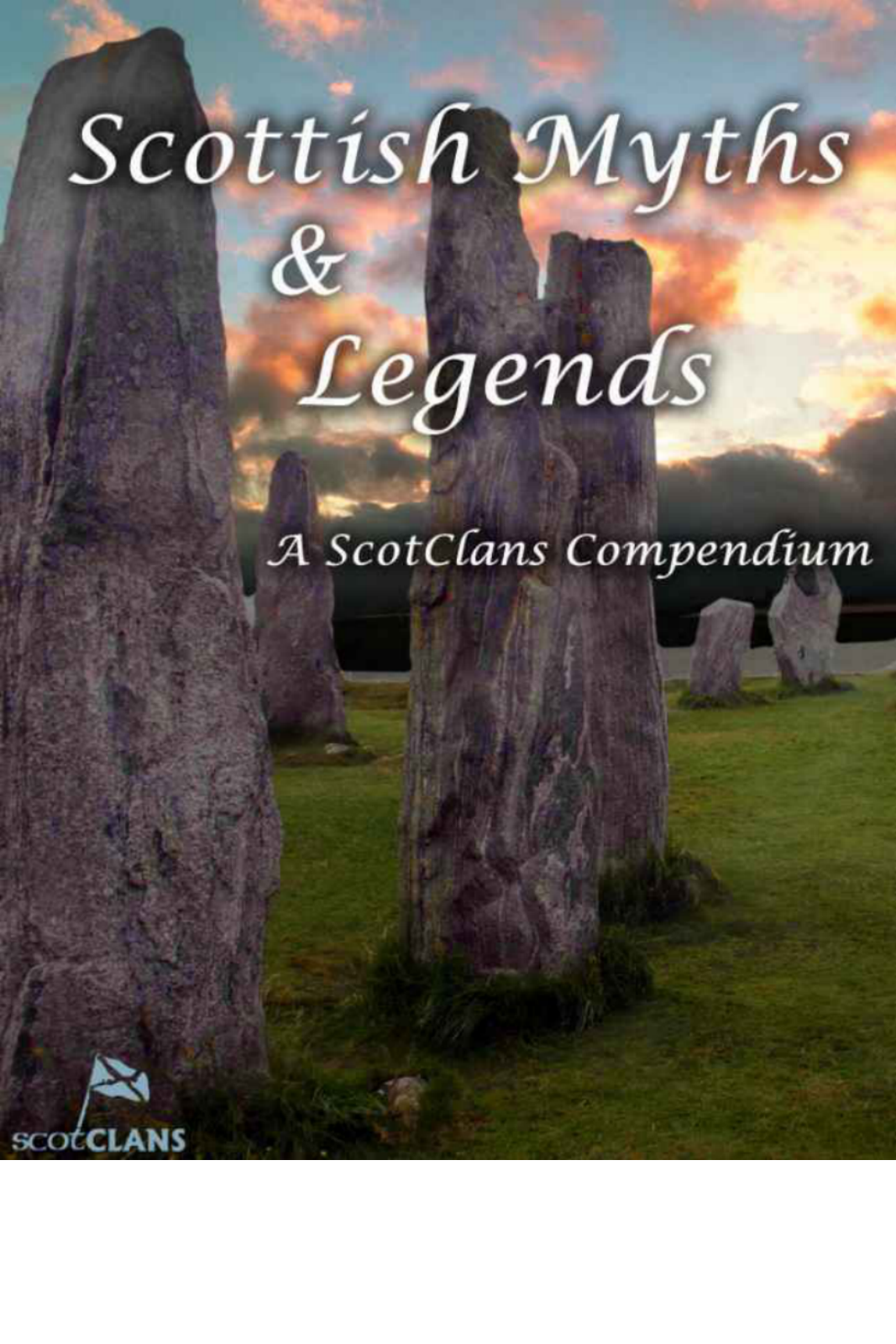




Scottish Myths & Legends

A ScotClans Compendium

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Scottish Myths and Legends

A compendium of stories from around Scotland

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Introduction

Scotland is an ancient land steeped in history and legend. Stories have been handed down over generations through oral traditions. Some stories such as the one that begins our book are very recent whereas others may go back to the times when Scotland was a wild tribal place.

Over the years at ScotClans we have collected many stories; some featured on our website and others we have gathered as we have travelled around Scotland. Our guest blogger, Tom Moss has also contributed a wealth of stories from Scotland's Border region.

The stories have been split into a number of categories and within each they are in no particular order. From cannibals to cannonballs, flying saucers and grey ladies. Heroes villains and monsters from every corner of Scotland!

Rodger and Amanda Moffet 2011

Supernatural Scotland

As organised religion in the shape of Christianity spread through Europe it replaced older beliefs. These beliefs were deeply rooted in local culture and superstition, they determined so much of everyday life; rituals of fertility could mean life or death to those whose livelihood was made from the land. The great success of the Christian faith was how it absorbed many of these beliefs and rituals, however there was a darker side, the side which worshipped more menacing pagan symbols. Stories from the darker side of our nature and stories that cannot be explained are everywhere in Scotland, find out more about Scotland's supernatural past.... and present!

The Bonnybridge UFO

By Rodger Moffet

Scotland has a fantastic reputation as a tourist destination, the dark rolling mountains, the crystal clear lochs and misty glens. Every year thousands of visitors flock to Scotland from America, Japan, Europe and..... Outer Space! But strangely our little green backpackers don't pour up the A9 to Inverness, stopping off for an overpriced coffee and a cashmere scarf at Brewer Falls, they don't even take in some street theatre at the Edinburgh Fringe - no that's just too 'touristy'. No the alien elite head for the town of Bonnybridge.

Bonnybridge is a small town near to Falkirk with a population of around 6,000 - it could possibly be the most unremarkable town in central Scotland and yet the area, which is now referred to as 'The Falkirk Triangle' averages around 300 UFO sightings per year - this is more than anywhere else on the planet making this sleepy little notch on Scotland's central belt the place to be seen if your transport of choice is saucer shape, you have a penchant for mutilating cows and have a distinctly greenish pallor.

Having passed through Bonnybridge I have to confess that I'm at a loss to see the attraction. It has a very nice public library (the science fiction section being particularly well stocked) The Antonine Wall and Forth & Clyde canal run nearby and there's the usual smattering of commuter housing. But there's no secret military installations (but then I guess if they were secret we wouldn't know) No alien autopsy sites, in fact the perfect place for Zarg the merciless and his little Zargons to get away from all the stress of interplanetary domination.

But don't worry because the local 'cooncil' have been on the case. Falkirk Councilor Billy (Fox Mulder) Buchanan has been helping to put Bonnybridge on the UFO spotters map, bringing the case of Bonnybridge in front of three prime ministers (probably four now) and the Queen. Heated debates have been held in the locality discussing possibilities that Bonnybridge was a gateway to another dimension, or that there may have been other spirits involved - the spirits in this case being along the lines of Buckfast tonic wine and the odd bottle of 'mad dog' or of course the possibility that there was nothing in it but it wasn't harming the potential for less otherworldly

tourists. I have even read a theory that the UFO activity is linked to the real Stone of Destiny and that the lights are guiding the righteous to its location hidden somewhere nearby.

So when we trim away the misidentified aircraft, the weather balloons, the odd cloud formations and the 1974 Nissan Sunny with an oversized spoiler and a fat exhaust what is left?

Well there are a few that make it into the 'Ecks Files'

In October 1994 three cleaners on their way to work said they saw five UFOs. When they got to work they told their manager what had happened. To his surprise a number of employees then came forward to confirm that they too had seen flashing lights and strange orange orbs glowing in the vicinity for the past week. Strange enough but the best known case has become part of UFO lore as the 'Dechmont Law Encounter'

Robert Taylor worked as a forester working for the Livingston Development Corporation. On the 9th November 1979 he traveled up to a plantation close to the M8 Motorway to inspect the site. As he walked up towards a clearing at around 10:30 am he saw a large spherical object with a gray metallic finish. The object appeared to be around 20 feet in diameter and 12 feet high. As Taylor approached the object it dropped towards the ground and two smaller spheres with protruding spikes (he described them as looking like old naval mines) appeared from the bottom and began to roll towards him. Taylor attempted to escape but the spheres caught his trousers - ripping them at the bottom and began to drag him back towards the larger object.

Taylor passed out for around 20 minutes - when he came too he heard a hissing sound and then said the UFO just vanished. He had to crawl nearly 100 yards to his pickup truck as the encounter had left him temporarily unable to walk. After reporting the incident the site was thoroughly investigated and several marks in the ground were detected in the clearing, which could not be explained.

Lothian & Border's Police were baffled and since Taylor had shown

signs of being attacked had to treat the case as assault. Thereby ensuring that the first recorded aliens to visit Scotland could go home with a criminal record. Despite several appeals the Aliens have not come forward - no doubt not fancying a short spell in the Bar-L.

So the next time you are driving along a deserted highway and you see lights hovering in front of you - don't panic its just another spring break road trip from planet Zark lost on the way to Bonnybridge!

The Bean Nighe

By Rodger Moffet

It's a dark evening and you find yourself wandering in the gathering gloom along the side of a small highland stream. You are alerted by some movement down near the water and spot an old woman apparently washing clothes in the stream. You may be tempted to wander down to the side of the stream and pass the time of day before making your way home. This would be a big mistake for the old woman is the dreaded Bean Nighe, 'The Washerwomen at the Ford'. The Bean Nighe (pronounced ben-nee'-yeh) is related to the Irish Banshee (Bean Sidhe) and also has a French equivalent, Les Lavandières. She is seen wandering near streams and pools where she washes the bloodstained clothes of those who are about to die. As such she is seen as an omen of death just like the Banshee. The legend has it that the Bean Nighe is the spirit of a woman who has died in childbirth and is cursed to carry out her role until the day her life would have normally ended.

As you might expect the Bean Nighe wouldn't win many prizes in a beauty competition. She is a small and very ugly woman with a hooked nose and one large nostril. She has a large protruding tooth, webbed feet and long hanging breasts. Safe to say that it takes more than a few drams before you considered chatting her up, which is a shame really because with the right approach it could have its rewards. When we say 'right approach' we don't use the term lightly, get it wrong and you are in serious trouble.

Now before you go, 'right then, I'm off up the burn tae get jiggy wae yon washer wifey' a note of caution - the approach is a bit, er direct shall we say! Firstly you must approach quietly without her seeing you. While she's busy at her washing you need to quickly grab her breast and suckle from it (well we did warn you). Once there you can claim to be her foster child. You will then be granted a wish (presumably 'i wish to forget about what has just happened' being popular at this point).

No mean feat, as a chat up technique it wouldn't go down well at the village hall caeilidh so one can imagine that pulling off the same stunt with the 'fairy folk' would have dire consequences if it went wrong.

There is supposedly a less dangerous technique of getting between her and the water and for this you are supposed to get three wishes. I'm guessing this is 'wishful thinking.'

One last note, should you happen to be wandering near a stream on Islay beware as their version; the Caointeach or "wailer" of Islay is much more dangerous. If she is interrupted from her grim task she will strike the person's legs with her wet linen whereby they will lose the use of them altogether. Try explaining that one to the wife!

Ewan The Headless

By Amanda Moffet

During the 1300s two dominant branches of the same Clan existed. MacLean of Duart and MacLaine of Lochbuie were headed by two brothers; Eachann Reaganach (Hector the stern) controlled the MacLain of Lochbuie and Lachainn Lubanach (Lachlan the Wily) controlled the stronger Macleans of Duart.

Hector had a son who he called Ewan with the small head, this name perhaps evidence that Ewan was not the brightest clan member. Ewan married a rather dominant woman who picked on him from morning to night. She was known as 'The black bottomed heron of the MacDougals'. His father was now elderly and his wife wanted to make sure that it was Ewan who would inherit the clan castle and it's lands. Hector eventually became annoyed at their constant badgering of him and eventually an argument took place. During the argument Ewan drew his sword and hit his father on his head with it and stormed off. Furious with his son's behavior Hector went to speak with his brother Lachlan. Unable to contain his anger Lachlan challenged Ewan to a battle.

On the eve of the battle Ewan took a walk through a nearby wood. As he approached the stream that runs through the wood to Ewan's astonishment he spotted a washer-woman sitting at the ford of the river. The woman is hunched over with long hair and large drooping breasts. She washes clothes that are not dirty and as she does blood runs from them and into the stream. The washer-woman is not mortal but one of the fairy folk (known as the Bean Nighe) and a bad omen to those who see her. Ewan knew what he had to do and sneaks up behind her, she is singing a lament to all those soldiers who have fallen in battle. Ewan took her breast in his mouth and suckles like a baby. He tells her that he is her first born, to this she grants him a wish. Ewan not very brightly asks what the outcome of the battle will be. To this she replies:

"If tomorrow morning you are given butter with your porridge without asking then you will be victorious." Ewan is angry at this answer and curses the washer-woman and in a bad temper goes back to the castle. It is not a good idea to curse at a washer-woman .

The next morning Ewan and his clan members are in the banqueting hall waiting for breakfast to be served. The servants bring the porridge but Ewan refuses to let anybody eat, everyone sits in silence and waits. As time goes on and no butter has arrived Ewan becomes angry and shouts at his wife:

"The servants we have are terrible they don't even bring me butter with my porridge!"

He leaves for battle with his men, none of whom have had their porridge.

A fierce battle commences, In the middle of battle Ewan aptly receives a sword blow to the top of his head slicing the top of it off. Ewan manages to mount his horse, but as the horse gallops off Ewan dies slumped in his saddle. The MacLeans of Duart leave the battlefield victorious.

From this point on it is said that whenever a member of the Lochbuie MacLaines dies that the presence of the headless horseman is felt and the clattering of hooves is heard. Some even say that Ewan 'The Headless' rides out to harvest in the souls of the Lochbuie MacLaines.

The Brahan Seer

By Rodger Moffet

Living around the same time as the legendary Nostradamus was a farm labourer called Coinneach Odhar. His prophesies are maybe not as well known as his contemporary but the alarming accuracy of his predictions has added to the sense of mystery that still exists around the Black Isle. Indeed many of those local to this area of Scotland still hold his predictions in great reverence.

The 'Brahan Seer' was possibly born near Uig on the Isle of Lewis towards the end of the 17th Century. His gift of 'Second Sight' was reputed to come from a small blue and black stone with a hole in the centre. Popular legend has it that his mother had witnessed spirits wandering near a graveyard and had prevented one spirit from returning after her wanderings. She finally allowed the spirit to go back to rest and she had been given the stone as a gift in return.

Coinneach Odhar's travels led him to an area near Strathpeffer. He lived by Loch Ussie and worked on the Brahan estates; home to the powerful Seaforth MacKenzies. It was from here that many of his prophesies were made.

He predicted the Battle of Culloden and the demise of the Highland way of life; in one prediction he was walking on Drummossie moor when he said "Thy bleak wilderness will be stained by the best blood of the Highlands. Glad I am that I will not live to see that day where heads will be lopped off in the heather and no lives spared." Half a century later the infamous battle was fought on this spot. furthermore in another prediction he said that "the clans will become so effeminate as to flee from their native country before an army of sheep." A very direct reference to the Highland Clearances.

Some of his predictions saw a return of the fortunes of Scotland and other advancement such as his statement: "Strange as it may seem to you this day, time will come, and it is not far off, when full-rigged ships will be seen sailing eastward and westward by the back of Tomnahurich, near Inverness." 150 years later the Caledonian Canal linked the Lochs along the Great Glen. He was also reported to have

said that Scotland's Parliament would return when a man could walk from England to France without getting their feet wet. With the building of the channel tunnel this was indeed possible and the parliament soon followed.

Other predictions sounded downright bizarre. In nearby Strathpeffer he predicted that when a fifth spire was built in the town a ship would snag its anchor on the newest one. The townsfolk were mindful of this years later when indeed a fifth spire was erected in the town. Thinking that the predicted a great flood they were relived in 1932 when an airship attending a nearby fair caught its moorings in the spire and fulfilled the prediction.

Unfortunately for the seer the accurate and precise nature of his predictions were to be his downfall:

His powers had come to the attention of his employers the Earl of Seaforth and his wife. While the Earl was away in Paris his wife Isabella called for Coinneach Odhar and asked him to tell her how her husband was. The seer seemed reluctant to give any information and simply said that he was in good health. This enraged Isabella who demanded more information, the seer then told her that her husband was on his knees in front of a French lady fairer than herself. This was too much for Lady Isabella and she flew into a rage and had the poor seer thrown into a barrel of tar.

As he was being dragged off to meet his fate he made his last and most chilling prediction as a curse on the family of MacKenzie; "The line of Seaforth will come to an end in sorrow. I see the last head of his house both deaf and dumb. He will be the father of four fair sons, all of whom he will follow to the tomb. He will live careworn, and die mourning, knowing that the honours of his line are to be extinguished forever, that no future chief of the Mackenzies shall bear rule at Brahan or in Kintail."

In 1783 Francis Humberston Mackenzie inherited the title. He was indeed deaf and mute due to a childhood attack of scarlet fever. He had 4 children all of whom died prematurely fulfilling the final prophesy.

To this day the Brahan Seers predictions are remembered in this part of the highlands. The fireside tales have been passed down through generations and some evidence exists on how serious the local people take his prophesies. In the small town of Strathpeffer stands the Eagle Stone; a small celtic standing stone. He predicted that if the stone fell three times the nearby loch would burst its banks and flood the village. It has fallen twice already and is now cemented into place!

Major Weir - The Wizard of the West Bow

By Rodger Moffet

The narrow winding streets and dark cavernous closes of Edinburgh can feel eerie enough at night as you walk alone. But listen out for the wrap of a cane on the cobbles and look out for a dark shadowy figure for it may be the ghost of Major Weir -The Wizard of the West Bow!

Major Thomas Weir was born in 1599 and had a significant military career as a covenanting soldier. He led the escort that carried the Marquis of Montrose to his execution and was captain of the Town Guard in Edinburgh until 1650. A tall stern looking man he was always seen carrying a black thornwood staff, carved with satyr heads wherever he went.

Weir lived in Edinburgh's West Bow a winding street that ran from the Royal Mile down towards the Grassmarket. The street Links the two halves of Edinburgh perfectly; at the top the Castle, Courts, Libraries and Cathedrals of Edinburgh's high culture. Down via Victoria Street you descend into the bars, inns and the darker side of the city leading to the rear of Greyfriars Churchyard where the likes of Burke & Hare were known to stalk.

In Weir's time though the street was a well known area where many of the city's most pious citizens lived. The Presbyterians who lived there were known as the 'Bowhead Saints'. Of all the Religious men who lived there Weir was considered the purest and one of the most active, frequently attending religious meetings and leading the company in prayer - never without his trusty staff.

Thomas Weir lived with his sister Jean (though some refer to her by the less flattering name "Grizel"). It seemed like the perfect hallowed arrangement. All this was to change though when during one of Weir's many prayer meetings he suddenly appeared to be struck down by a strange illness...

Without warning the Major suddenly began to confess of the most unspeakable crimes. He announced his incestuous relationship with

Jean along with shocking tales of fornication with all manner of women and beasts.

At first no one could believe it - Weir was such a pillar of the community that the provost, Sir Andrew Ramsay, refused to take it seriously. Then, when his sister Jean backed up his story by admitting to years of incest they had to arrest the Major. The trial began on April 9, 1670 and Jean told how the talent for witchcraft has been inherited from their mother, she revealed that Thomas bore the mark of the Beast on his body and that they frequently roamed the countryside in a fiery coach, popping down the road to Musselburgh and Dalkeith to do their devilish work.

Jean warned the town authorities of the power of Weir's infamous staff. She claimed it was the source of his power and had been given to him by the devil himself. With such shocking evidence the assembled worthies took no time to convict Weir of witchcraft and he was taken to a spot on the cities boundary with Leith (just off Leith Walk near where Pilrig Street lies today) where he was strangled and burnt.

As the rope was put around Weir's neck he was asked to say "Lord be merciful to me". Instead he apparently replied:

"Let me alone, I will not. I have lived as a beast, and I must die as a beast". His sister was similarly unrepentant and there are tales that she tore off her clothes on the scaffold making the scene even more wretched and shocking. Major Thomas Weir was the last man executed for witchcraft in Scotland. As his body burned his staff was thrown into the fire. Witnesses said that it took an unusually long time to burn and made strange turning movements as it burned.

With such a shocking history no one dared live in the old Major's house and for over 100 years it lay empty. Some who dared to spend the night nearby recounted the sound of revelry coming from the house and other strange occurrences. finally the house was pulled down in the 19th century.

Many claim that the ghost of Major Weir still roams the streets and

closes near to the West Bow, wile others claim that they have seen his devilish staff roaming the streets by itself searching for its master.

Urquhart Castle and The Magic Well

By Amanda Moffet

Way back in the days before Urquhart Castle existed in the days when the Great Glen was just starting to have settlers - perhaps some of our Urquhart ancestors before the name of Urquhart was even spoken - and took advantage of it's abundant food and resources. It was a fertile valley which made life easy.

Legend has it that these people had a magical well, a spring which Daly the Druid had made magical, which brought forth healing waters for all ills. There was a condition placed on using this magical well - after each use, the cover had to be placed back upon the well lest the well rise up and destroy the valley.

Alas, one day, a mother had removed the cover from the well and was drawing the magical water. Her baby started to cry and when she heard, like all good mothers, she went to her child's aid. In her speed to do so, she neglected to replace the cover upon the magic well and although she may have had all intentions of doing so, by the time she realized she had left the cover off unattended, the well had turned into a roaring fountain of water, gushing forth water with such force that she had no option but to run with her baby, clambering up the sides of the valley.

The other settlers, seeing and hearing the great commotion and roaring of the water, also took to the paths up out of the valley, knowing that all was now lost. Their homes, possessions, all were lost, but they managed to escape the rising water.

One of those who escaped, looking back at their great valley filling with water almost as fast as they could climb, cried out in disbelief and anguish "Tha loch ann a nis!" - which means "There is a lake in it now!" That great valley of the Great Glen, draws it's name from those words "Loch ann a nis": Loch Ness.

So, all I can say is this, if your over by Urquhart Castle having a look for Nessy, remember those waters around the Urquhart stronghold

have magical healing properties, as I cannot find any reference to that healing well ever being covered again.

So it was that a magical well and the careless action of that mother in haste produced the landscape and loch that the setting of Urquhart Castle takes advantage of.

The Wizard laird of Skene's dance with the devil

By Amanda Moffet

Skene Loch is an eerie and forbidding place, particularly on cold evenings in the dead of winter - when the waters on the loch can freeze over. If you were to brave the icy conditions and venture down to the lochside and look across the frozen loch you might see what seems like a mysterious set of curved tracks embedded in the ice. Tracks which look newly made by a coach or carriage.

You could put this down to a trick of the light but there's a local tale behind these strange markings. A legend that has passed down over centuries. This story is about the sinister local landowner who was allied with the devil ... those with psychic powers swear they can still feel his presence to this day.

So the tracks on the ice? are they a lasting reminder of the day Auld Nick himself paid a visit to his devil-worshipping friend the Wizard Laird of Skene.

Alexander Skene, the 16th Laird, was the man the devil had come to Aberdeenshire to see. It was said the laird never cast a shadow, was followed everywhere by magpies or crows and had the power to reest, or glue, his enemies to the spot where they stood. On at least one occasion Skene was kept awake by neighbors enjoying a ceilidh. His reaction was to cast a spell on the revellers which made them unable to stop dancing - until their feet bled and they cried in agony.

His mastery of the black arts had been learned while he was a young student at the University of Padua in northern Italy. One of the most famous seats of learning in Europe, Padua was noted for the views some of its members held on the then-controversial subjects of astronomy and necromancy. Many returned with "peculiar ideas" about the heavens and the black arts. The Wizard Laird went one step further and formed a pact with the devil.

The wizard's coachman was named Kilgour and was well used to his master's eccentricities - but nothing could have prepared him for the

night the devil came calling.

Kilgour was ordered to prepare the coach and horses at midnight to transport his special guest from Skene House, the family mansion. But the laird made Kilgour promise that on no account was he to turn round and look at the stranger.

As the coach and horses sped through the dark countryside, the laird told Kilgour to take the more direct route across the Loch of Skene. There had only been one night's frost and the coachman said such a journey would be impossible - but the wizard told him not to worry, the ice was strong enough.

The night would have passed without incident had Kilgour's curiosity not got the better of him. As they were approaching the other side of the loch he did what his master had told him not to do - he turned round. What he saw terrified him. For there sat the unmistakable horned, cloven-footed figure of the devil himself - Auld Nick.

As soon as Kilgour turned to look the ice cracked, the devil turned into a raven and flew off and the coach and horses sank to the bottom of the loch. Whether the laird and his coachman escaped depends on which variation of the tale you hear.

Sheena Blackhall, a poet and historian in north-east Scotland, spent part of her childhood in Skene and remembers local children saying that if they ran 100 times round the Wizard Laird's gravestone he would rise from the dead.

Despite his supposed deal with the devil, the laird is buried in the churchyard in the village of Kirkton of Skene. The wizard lived from around 1680 until 1724 but his activities had such an impact on the superstitious local people that, even last century, fires were lit at Halloween to keep him at bay. The author William Somerset Maugham heard the story while recovering from tuberculosis at Glen O'Dee Hospital in Banchory, Kincardineshire, and used it as inspiration for his novel, *The Magician*, in which evil deeds take place at Skene House.

The Skene family are said to have been a sept of the Clan Robertson. According to tradition one young clan member saved the life of King Malcolm Canmore by killing a wolf with his sgian, or knife. The king then granted him as much land as could be covered by a hawk's flight and the family received a charter in 1318 from Robert the Bruce. The line died out in the 19th century with the 20th laird, who was deaf. The reputedly cursed Skene House is now in a sad state of repair.

If you think stories of warlocks, curses and visitations by the devil are fanciful nonsense then consider the words of Stanley Robertson, a former gypsy traveller who lived in the Skene area and claims to possess psychic powers.

"The travellers say that if there is something demonic about a place, the frisson will rise up your back instead of down. That is why the hackles rise at the back of your head. And that is exactly the feeling I got when I once visited Skene House, my hackles rose and I had the feeling something very evil had taken place there."

Fyvie Castle and the ghostly trumpeter

By Amanda Moffet

Fyvie Castle is haunted by the ghost of a phantom trumpeter who first made his appearance there in the 18th century. The trumpeter was a man called Andrew Lammie and he fell in love with Agnes Smith, the local miller's daughter. Agnes' parents did not approve of Andrew Lammie.

Learning that Andrew and Agnes were meeting in secret the Laird, who himself wanted the girl as his mistress, had Andrew seized and sent in slavery to the West Indies. After several years Andrew managed to escape and return to Scotland to look for his beloved Agnes, only to discover that she had died a short while after he had been forcibly taken abroad. Andrew died of shock but before his death swore that the sound of a trumpet would foretell the death of every laird of Fyvie as a reminder of the terrible injustice he had suffered.

Shortly after Andrew's death the haunting of Fyvie began and for many years afterwards the trumpet would be heard in the dead of night before the death of the laird. On several occasions the shadowy figure of a tall man, dressed in rich tartan, was seen by the castle wall, a figure which always disappeared when approached.

Bluidy Tam and his card game with the devil

By Amanda Moffet

General Thomas Dalyell (1615 – 1685) was also known by the names Dalziell, Dalziel or Dalzell, as well as Bluidy Tam and the Muscovite de'il. He was a Scottish Royalist General in the Wars of the Three Kingdoms.

Born in Linlithgowshire; the son of Thomas Dalyell of the House of the Binns, Linlithgowshire; head of a cadet branch of the family of the Earls of Carnwath, and of Janet, daughter of the 1st Lord Bruce of Kinloss, Master of the Rolls in England.

Legend has it that "Bluidy Tam" enjoyed on occasion a hand of cards with the Devil. During one of these games, the Devil losing threw the card table at the General. The Devil missed and the Table flew threw through the window and ended up in a pond on the grounds of the House of the Binns. This tale was passed down through generations of inhabitants of the Binns. In 1870 following a particularly hard drought, a Marble topped Card table was seen poking through the low waters of the pond. In 1930 the Mother of the present Tam Dalyell asked a local joiner to repair the legs on a table, only to find out that the - about to be retired - tradesman's first job was to retrieve said table from the pond.

Outlaws on Pabay and The deal With The Devil

By Amanda Moffet

Pabay is a small island just off Skye. On Pabay are the ruins of a small chapel, built originally by St. Columba's monks. After the chapel fell into disuse and the monks left, it became a refuge for outlaws 'broken men' and robbers. They caused much trouble on the main island of Skye. Legend has it this bunch of criminals met their end in a very unusual way. They had, of course many enemies and their chief decided to rid himself of them all with the help of the Devil. The band made up a huge fire and roasted three cats alive chanting the appropriate spells, an infallible way of raising the Evil One if you get the spells right. It was told that several minor demons appeared, but the robber chief insisted that he would only deal with the Devil himself.

Eventually Satan rose from the earth and asked their will. The robber chief told the Devil to kill two men whom the chief feared. The Devil responded "The price of two lives is two souls". This worried the gang and an argument began. Now, the chief had been known to boast that if he could only get swords that would not melt, he would be able to conquer Hell and capture Satan himself. The Devil reminded him of this and accepted his challenge, offering to kill all his enemies if he won the battle. The Devil was to fight the band for their souls 'here on the shore where swords do not melt.' The robber chief was so arrogant that he agreed. A fearful battle ensued, the Devil and his legions overcoming all the bandits who were armed with claymores or broadswords but failed to harm the chief, whose sword had a cross hilt. Suddenly a great black cat jumped from nowhere onto the chief's sword arm, causing him to drop his blade. He was never seen again.

The blackened stones where the evil fire was lit, on the beach near Ardnish can still be seen, proof to the truth of this tale.

Tales From The Cuillins; The Beginning

By Amanda Moffet

The Cuillins or The Black Cuillins to be more specific are as dark as their name, a mass of pinnacles and sharp rock ridges violently indented against the sky. It is of no surprise that they play host to many legends. This one concerns how these mountains came to be formed in the first place.

Way back at the beginning lived Cailleach Bhur (The Hag of the Ridges), this was also another name for Winter. She lived on Ben Wyvis and came west to boil her linen in her washing pot, the dangerous whirlpool of Corryvreckan. She was a fearsome and powerful person who had made Scotland by dropping into the sea a creel of peat and rock which she had brought with her from the north. After her linen had boiled well she would spread them to bleach on Storr. It was said that while the hag was on Skye no good weather was to be got at all. Now 'Spring' came here because the hag held the maiden he loved prisoner. The Hag would only release the maiden when she washed a brown fleece white.

There was a great battle between Spring and the Hag, he fought with her, but she was stronger. He appealed to the Sun to help him and the Sun flung a spear at The Hag as she walked on the moor; it was so fiery and hot it scorched the earth where it struck, a great blister, six miles long and six miles wide, grew and grew until it burst and flung forth the Cuillins as a glowing, molten mass. It stood there for many, many months glowing and smoking. The Hag ran away and hid beneath the roots of a holly and dared not return.

Even now, her snow is useless against the fiery hills.

Merlin in Drumelzier

By Donald Cuthill

It is said, according Scottish myth, that Merlin, the wizard from Arthurian legend, is buried in the Borders town of Drumelzier.

However, there are many different versions of what actually happened to Merlin, ranging from his own prophecy of a "triple death" to slightly more supernatural accounts of him being imprisoned in a tree and left to die by Morgan le Fay, another Arthurian legend, or being entranced by spiders and fairies who bound him in their threads until he completely vanished from human sight.

The account which seems to be most prevalent, and perhaps most realistic, is the story of Merlin predicting his own death.

Sometime during the 570s, the Battle of Arderyth (or Ardderyd) saw Gwenddoleu ap Ceidio take on King Riderch Hael of Strathclyde in a bloody skirmish. The specific location of the battle is unknown, with some believing that it was fought in modern day Peebles, whilst others have claimed that it took place near Airdrie, or even down in Cumbria, in the north-west of England. However, it was said to have been a particularly bloody and violent fight that saw the annihilation of Gwenddoleu's army. Merlin was the bard to Gwenddoleu and fought on the losing side. Legend has it that Merlin, witnessing such carnage, was driven into a state of insanity and fled to the depths of the Caledonian Forest. It was in the forest where he apparently met Saint Mungo (also known as St. Kentigern). St. Mungo, an apostle from the late sixth century, was born in the Fife coastal village of Culross and was the founder and patron saint of Glasgow. Merlin and Mungo spent a long time talking, and it was during this meeting where it is said that Merlin was converted from Paganism to Christianity. It was not long after his meeting with St. Mungo, Merlin had a sense of foreboding. He felt that something was not quite right and then suddenly he had a premonition of his own murder; what he described as a "triple death" where he would be cudgeled, drowned and stabbed.

Later that day Merlin was on his own in the forest when out of

nowhere a group of men he recognised as being enemies appeared and set upon him. Merlin was beaten then pushed, causing him to fall into a nearby river, where he was finally run through with a stake whilst helpless in the water. This beating, drowning, and fatal impaling was the "triple death" that Merlin foresaw only hours earlier.

Reference to Merlin's final resting place in Drumelzier has been made since as early as the 13th century. Thomas the Rhymer, famous laird, poet and supposed prophet, was said to have foreseen the 1603 Union of Crowns when he predicted that when the Tweed floods into Merlin's grave Scotland and England will have one king. And such a flooding from the Tweed occurred, no doubt coincidentally, on the very day Scotland's James VI was crowned King of England.

The place in Drumelzier where Merlin is said to be buried is marked modestly by a thorn tree, near where a burn joins onto the River Tweed. The town has placed a plaque at the bottom of the tree acknowledging "the wizard Merlin's grave", and where it also states that the present tree is not the original one, which was swept away in a flood sometime in the late 1920s.

Symbolic Scotland

There are many symbols which can embody the character of a nation. Scotland is no different in that respect; The saltire, this thistle and the lion rampant are all significant symbols of our nation. Furthermore there are symbols held dear by the many of the Scottish Clans, Some obvious in their representation on clan crests others less well known in clan artifacts.

The Story of The Saltire

By Rodger Moffet

Take a walk through Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness or any other Scottish town and city and you will see countless saltire flags. They adorn the flagpoles of buildings, appear on t-shirts, key rings, mugs - anything that can accommodate one. But how many know the story behind Scotland's national flag - prepare to be enlightened!

First of all lets start with a very remarkable fact; The saltire is believe it or not the oldest continuously used sovereign flag in the world. Legend has it that in 832 AD, a Pictish army under King Angus MacFergus, High King of Alba, along with a force of Scots under Eochaidh, King of Dalriada (and grandfather of Kenneth MacAlpin), came up against a Northumbrian force under King Aethelstan of East Anglia in Lothian. The Pictish army were surrounded by superior numbers and prayed for assistance. That night Saint Andrew who was martyred on a saltire shaped cross appeared to Angus and assured him of victory.

As both armies prepared for battle the following morning an image appeared in the sky of a white cross. The image encouraged the Picts and frightened the Northumbrian army who fled in panic. The site of the battle is known as Athelstanford after the Northumbrian leader who was killed in the battle. From then onwards the Saltire has been used as Scotland's national flag. Traditionally the saltire is blue (some say to represent the sky in the vision) but some versions have existed which have the white cross on a black background (due to the shortage of vegetable dyes that could reproduce the colour) and even green or red.

The Saltire is also referred to as St Andrew's cross and as you will certainly know he is the patron saint of Scotland. what you may not know (unless you come from these countries) is that he also happens to be patron saint of Romania and Russia. St Andrew was a fisherman from Galilee and brother of Simon (Peter). One of the first disciples of Christ, Andrew is thought to have went on to be a missionary in Asia and Greece. He was finally crucified by the Romans at Patras in 69 AD. The legend of St Andrews cross came from the fact that feeling unworthy of a crucifixion similar to Christ he demanded to be

crucified on an X shaped cross.

His remains were entombed in Constantinople but later removed by St Rule who was told to take the remains to the 'ends of the earth' for safe keeping. He removed a tooth, arm bone, kneecap and some fingers from the tomb and set off for the most remote place he could find. That place was on Scotland's east coast and has become known as St Andrews. The relics were later destroyed during the Reformation and most of the other remains were stolen from Constantinople and moved to Amalfi in Italy. Some of these relics were presented to Scotland in 1879 and 1969.

And so the Saltire became the flag of Scotland. The Saltire with its clear religious significance was worn by Scottish crusaders to the Holy Land and incorporated into their coats of arms. Many Scottish noble families adopted the saltire in this way; Bruces, Johnstones, Kirkpatricks and even some Norman families.

In 1511 the warship 'The Great Michael' was launched. commissioned by King James IV of Scotland this was the biggest warship in the world at that time. The 'mayn standert' was the saltire and records show that it cost a whopping £72 7s. 6d. A few years later just before the battle of Flodden the flag makers were once again busy. Records of the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer show details of the commission for purchase of material and labour costs for making the King's standards.

During the Scottish Reformation the Saltire appeared on many flags of the Covenanting forces. It is suggested that this "Covenanters flag" inspired the blue in the new flag of the United States during the American Revolution.

In the 1707 Act of Union, Scotland and England became the United Kingdom. A new flag was designed that united the crosses of St Andrew and St George. in early versions of the union flag flown in Scotland the cross of St Andrew appeared in front of the Cross of St George. Later the cross of St Patrick was added to recognise Ireland's inclusion on the union. This cross is a red saltire which completes the well known design of the Union Flag (it is mistaken to refer to this

flag as the 'Union Jack' as a 'jack' is a flag flown on a ships bow and not on land so any other representation of this flag should be called the union flag) Another interesting point regarding the union flag is that it has never been legally recognised as the official flag of the United Kingdom.

During the time of the Jacobite rebellions the Jacobite forces again used the saltire, however this version sometimes featured a gold cross on a blue background.

The official blue of the saltire has varied over the years; from sky blue to dark navy and this depended on the availability of dyes. The saltire component of the Union Flag is a darker navy blue and many saltire makers adopted this colour. In 2003 the Scottish Parliament met to discuss the matter and decided after consultation with the Lord Lyon King of Arms to adopt a lighter shade (Pantone 300 to be precise).

As Scotland faces an exciting future filled with the promise of greater autonomy and self determination the Saltire will become even more important as a rallying symbol not just for residents of Scotland but for all those in every corner of the world who's hearts are here.

The Luckenbooth

By Rodger Moffet

The Royal Mile is a long cobbled street that runs down from Edinburgh castle to the palace of Holyrood. When Edinburgh castle was first established this was the only accessible route, the castle's situation on the dark rocky plug of an extinct volcano made it impregnable from all but the east where the weather battered remains of the old volcano formed a natural ramp.

With the establishment of Holyrood palace, or rather the original monastery in the 12th century the route between the two became an important thoroughfare. Businesses and government offices sprang up as well as several churches and the magnificent St Giles Cathedral.

By the 16th century many parts of this route became dedicated to markets and the wide area running down from St Giles towards the Canongate featured some of the city's first permanent shops. Many of these housed small trade people who made and sold their wares and among the most popular were the jewellers. The shops themselves were very small and were called 'Locked Booths'. From this we get the word 'Luckenbooth'

The Luckenbooth brooch became a very popular item in 16th century Scotland. It featured the heart and crown - the 'Heart & Crown of Scotland' and was romantically linked to the tragic Mary, Queen of Scots as it was the brooch she had given to Lord Darnley.

The tradition was that the young man would give his lady the brooch on their wedding day. When their first child arrived the brooch would then be pinned to the babies shawl to protect it from "evil spirits". As such it had very similar connotations to the Irish 'Claddagh' ring especially with the similar heart shaped theme.

The style of the Luckenbooth brooch became very popular throughout the UK. By the 18th century the trade in silver to the new world featured the little brooch and many ended up traded with Native Americans, particularly the Iroquois of the Six Nations. As a result of

this the Luckenbooth became a popular decorative symbol in their costumes.

Today Luckenbooth can still be purchased from small traders on Edinburgh's Royal Mile as well as online!

The Scottish Thistle

By Rodger Moffet

The thistle of Scotland is said to be the oldest national flower on record, the legend of how this proud and regal plant became a national emblem goes back many hundreds of years, to the time when Scotland was being rampaged by the vicious Vikings.

From 795 Scotland was under assault by wave upon wave of vicious Vikings. It was a frightening time to live in, Scotland was vulnerable to attack it's delicate civilisation built by generations of Christian monks.

For hundreds of years much of Scotland was part of the Kingdom of Norway. Even after Norway became christianised the attacks continued. Not until 1266 were the Western Isles returned to Scottish rule.

By 1263 however, Norway seems to have had little interest in their former territory, that was until King Alexander III proposed to buy back the Western Isles and Kintyre from the Norse King Haakon IV. The thought of relieving King Alexander of some of his riches and territories appears to have re-kindled Norse interest in Scotland.

Late in the summer of 1263 King Haakon of Norway, now intent on conquering the Scots, set off with a sizeable fleet of longships for the Scottish coast. Gales and fierce storms forced some of the ships onto the beach at Largs in Ayrshire, and a Norwegian force was landed. Legend has it that at some point during the invasion the Norsemen tried to surprise the sleeping Scottish Clansmen. In order to move more stealthily under the cover of darkness the Norsemen removed their footwear. But as they crept barefoot they came across an area of ground covered in thistles and one of Haakon's men unfortunately stood on one and shrieked out in pain, thus alerting the Clansmen to the advancing Norsemen.

His shout warned the Scots who defeated the Norsemen at the Battle of Largs, thus saving Scotland from invasion. The important role that

the thistle had played was recognised and so was chosen as Scotland's national emblem.

Haakon died returning to Norway, a treaty returned the Hebrides to Scottish rule, and a marriage contract wedded Scotland and Norway.

Another version of this legend attributes the legendary King Achius with the appropriation of the thistle. This King is said to have founded the Order of the Thistle in the ninth century, limiting the number of Knights to 13, including himself. Unfortunately, this story is yet to be proved, but there definitely is an Order of the Knights of the Thistle which commenced – or was refounded – by James VII in 1687. The Order has had a chequered history but today is firmly anchored in St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh.

The Knights have the motto 'Nemo me impune lacessit', which translates as 'No one assails me with impunity', but is more commonly read as 'Wha daur meddle wi' me'. This motto is also used by Scotland as a nation and, thinking of the spiny prickles of the thistle, could hardly be bettered.

The Fairy Flag of Dunvegan

By Rodger Moffet

One of the most treasured possessions of the clan MacLeod is the famous Fairy Flag of Dunvegan. The story behind the flag is one of the greatest romantic tales in all the highlands...

A great young Chief of the clan MacLeod fell in love with a fairy princess, a bean sidhe, one of the Shining Folk. The pair were determined to marry but the King of the fairies forbade the union. Such was the young fairy princesses distress that he finally relented and agreed to a period of 'Handfasting'. This was a form of trial marriage which traditionally would last for a year and day and was common in the highlands at the time. however The king demanded that at the end of the handfasting the princess must return to her own folk and take nothing human with her.

The couple lived in harmony and soon a young son was born to them. Alas the time sped by and soon the handfasting was over. The couple parted with great sorry at the famous fairy bridge and the princess returned to the fairy kingdom. As she left she made her husband, the chief promise that her son would be cared for well and never allowed to cry for the sound of his cries would cause her untold grief even in the far away fairy realm. The Chief kept his promise and the young MacLeod was never left unattended and never allowed to cry.

However the young chief grieved terribly for the loss of his wife and the other clansfolk decided that they should organise a great party in the Castle of Dunvegan on the occasion if his birthday to take his mind away from his grief. The birthday celebration ran long into the night with high spirits and the young nursemaid assigned to watch over the infant crept from the room to watch the revelries. As she watch enraptured by the celebrations she did not hear the baby kick off his covers and begin to cry.

The Child's mother heard the cries from her fairy realm and suddenly appeared by his side. She took up the young baby and cradled him back to sleep, covering him in a fairy shawl. She sang to the child and was still singing when the maid returned. The maid could hear the

lullaby but not see where it was coming from. She immediately took the baby with the shawl she did not recognise to the chief and told him what happened.

Many years later when the child grew into a young man he recounted a tale to his father that the shawl was a great talisman for the clan and that should they ever find themselves in mortal danger they could wave the flag three times and the fairy legions would come to their aid. however this talisman could only be used three times whereupon it would return to where it had come from taking the flag waver with it. The Chief instantly realised the young man was telling the truth and the flag was kept safe.

The Flag has since been used twice; Once when the Macleod's were vastly outnumbered by their bitter enemies the MacDonald's. The chief took the flag from its case and waved it three times, at which point the battle suddenly turned in favour of the MacLeod's. A second time the land was blighted by a plague on the cattle and the clan kinsmen were dying of starvation. The chief again raised the flag and the Fairies returned to bring the cattle back to life.

This may seem like a fanciful tale but many MacLeod's believe wholeheartedly in the legend. So much so that during world War II many Macleod servicemen carried a picture of the flag in their wallets. It is said that of the Macleod airmen who defended these shores during the Battle of Britain not one who carried the picture was lost and indeed the Chief of the clan offered to bring the flag to Dover to wave at the Germans should they attempt to invade.

The flag can still be seen in Dunvegan Castle on Skye.

The Clach na Bratach

By Amanda Moffet

The Clach na Bratach is considered to be the most precious relic of the Clan Robertson. It is a rock crystal charm stone and was unearthed when the chief's standard pole was pulled from the ground while on the march to Bannockburn. Since then the stone has been carried into battle by every Robertson chief.

The Clach na Bratach is said to have been a mystical, power stone which could do many magical things such as heal humans and animals, and it could also predict the future.

It is said that the Robertsons used to carry the Clach na Bratach into battle, and it was originally done by hand until they caged it on top of their standard pole. When it wasn't being carried to battle the stone was kept in a silken purse made by the Countess of Breadalbane.

They say that the stones primary function was to heal, and if the Clach na Bratach came into contact with water, the water automatically gained curative properties for all.

Legend tells that the stone could also predict the death of a Robertson clan chief. If the stone turned cloudy, then people would know that the chief's death would be imminent.

In 1715 Alexander Robertson of Struan, also known as the Poet Chief, consulted the Clach before he headed off to fight in the first Jacobite Rising, and perhaps unsurprisingly it filled his heart with dread when it saw that the orb had developed a large crack. Perhaps it told the truth. If Struan had not joined the rebellion, his own fortunes and that of his successors might have been very different.

The Annat Skull

By Amanda Moffet

There's a superstition in Applecross/Torridon area of Scotland that relates to the Annat skull in which water sipped from the skull of a female suicide is a supposed cure for epilepsy. The poor woman (C. M. Robertson) is thought to have been the daughter in law of the Garve Wizzard who is said to have lured passersby to their death in the Black Water river in order that he might steal their possessions. The skull became a controversial subject in 1900 when it was alleged to still be in use in Torridon. The Rev. Duncan Dewar, a minister of 24 years standing, felt compelled to respond publicly that 'no such' skull ever existed in the parish of Applecross'. Dewar may be correct in limiting his observation to his own parish but Rev. Kenneth MacDonald, of the Free Church around the same time, attests to it's use in Torridon.

Adapted from "Applecross and it's Hinterland - A Historical Miscellany" by Iain MacLennan

Jacobite Legends

When William of Orange took the English throne in 1689 it ended the Stewart Royal dynasty that had endured for centuries. Though many were glad to see the end of this chapter in our history many more, particularly in the Highlands were keen to see it re-established. From the Battle of Killiecrankie in 1689 through the first rebellion in 1715 to the more famous '45 the Jacobite cause was fought for time and time again. Many stories and myths from this time abound, here are just a few...

The Legend of The Appin Dirk

By Rodger Moffet

In the years after the Jacobite uprising of 1745, the terrible reputation of the government troops or 'Redcoats' as they sought to finally put down once and for all the brave highland clans was spread throughout the North of Scotland. One story concerning a poor milkmaid and a wicked redcoat sergeant passed into highland folklore and became known as the story of the Appin Dirk.

It was June 1746, only a few months after the disastrous battle of Culloden, Government troops were still engaged in a frenzy of looting and burning as they carried out Cumberland's order of 'No Quarter' beyond what was expected of them. One such detachment was passing through Lochaber and Appin on their way to the barracks at Inveraray. On the way they had burned small cottages, casting highlanders from their homes for nothing more than their own wicked amusement.

On one particular evening, as the troops moved through the Strath of Appin they encountered a young woman milking her cow in a nearby field. Overcome by their own bloodlust and some even more base instincts besides the sergeant who commanded the detachment leapt over the small wall into the field and with no warning shot the cow dead. With the cow dead he then advanced on the young woman - his intentions almost certainly dishonorable.

The young woman fought off the wicked sergeant bravely and ran off towards the Appin shore however she was pursued by him. In a last desperate attempt to make good her escape she picked up a good sized stone from the shore and hurled it at the sergeant with all her might. Whether by great accuracy or sheer luck the stone struck the sergeant square on the forehead, stunning him and knocking him to the ground. Her good shot gave her the few precious seconds she needed to make it to the shore where she knew a small boat lay moored. As the other soldiers tried to pursue her she managed to quickly row out of range and off to a small island where she sheltered for some time.

The sergeant was less fortunate, the blow had been more serious than

the soldiers had at first realised. He was taken to a nearby place where they could stop for the night but as the evening wore on his condition became worse - almost as if the stone itself had been cursed. During the night he died from his wound. The other soldiers decided to bury him in the nearby churchyard; the old churchyard of Airds and move on.

The hatred for the government troops in this corner of Scotland was so great that the local men felt appalled that such a beast should contaminate their churchyard. As soon as the detachment had gone they stole into the churchyard and dug up his body. They carried him down to the sea but were stopped on the way by the brother of the young woman who had been attacked. He pulled out a knife and tore the skin from the arm of the wicked sergeant. This he took away with him. The corpse was then, with no ceremony cast into the sea.

The milkmaid's brother dried and cured the skin and used it to make a sheath for his dirk.

Legends of the 'Appin Dirk' spread around the area, becoming a symbol of the highlanders continued resistance to occupation. In 1870 the Rev. Alexander Stewart who was in the area was shown a dirk by a local man which he claimed was 'The Appin Dirk' He described the sheath as having a dark-brown colour, limp and soft in appearance, with no ornament except a small piece of brass at the point, and a thin edging of the same metal round the opening. Around the brass rim there was a small inscription. The initials D.M.C. and a date; 1747.

This gruesome relic has long since vanished but the inscription does bear some clue into its possible whereabouts:

According to the story the young woman's name is given as Julia MacColl, the 'M.C.' of the inscription would suggest that this was the case as MacColl was a common name in that area at the time. Some years after the last sighting of the dirk many MacColls immigrated to New Zealand, among them were a few 'Julias'. It is highly possible that the descendants of Julia MacColl or her brother held on to the dirk and that it now lies undiscovered in New Zealand.

We know we have many readers in this part of the world so if you're name is MacColl or if you have any descent from this name maybe its time to have a search around your attic. It could be that that old chest handed down from your great great great grandmother may hold a grim secret!

The Phantom Regiment of Killiecrankie

By Rodger Moffet

The Battle of Killiecrankie, fought on the 16th of July, 1689, was part of the Jacobite Risings trying to get James VII/II back on the throne in Scotland, England, and Ireland. It was a bloody victory for the Highland Jacobite army against the government troops (mainly comprising of lowland Scots, incorrectly referred to as 'English') who supported William and Mary of Orange.

There were thousands killed at Killiecrankie - mostly Government men, but also, notably, the Jacobite commander, Viscount 'Bonnie' Dundee - so it's not surprising that there are a number of ghost stories surrounding the area where the battle was fought.

Here is one taken and adapted from Elliott O'Donnell's book 'Scottish Ghost Stories'.

"On a cycle tour in Scotland, making Pitlochry my temporary headquarters, I rode over one evening to view the historic Pass of Killiecrankie. It was late when I arrived there, and the western sky was one great splash of crimson and gold - such vivid colouring I had never seen before and never have seen since.

I paid no heed to the time, nor did I think of stirring, until the dark shadows of the night fell across my face. I then started up in a panic, and was about to pedal off in haste, when a notion suddenly seized me: I had a latchkey, plenty of sandwiches, a warm cape, why not camp out there till early morning? The idea was no sooner conceived than put into operation. Selecting the most comfortable-looking boulder I could see, I scrambled on to the top of it, and, with my cloak drawn tightly over my back and shoulders, commenced my vigil. The cold mountain air, sweet with the perfume of gorse and heather, intoxicated me, and I gradually sank into a heavenly torpor, from which I was abruptly aroused by a dull boom, that I at once associated with distant musketry. All was then still as the grave, and, on glancing at my watch, I saw it was two in the morning.

A species of nervous dread now laid hold of me which oppressed and disconcerted me. Moreover, I was impressed for the first time with the extraordinary solitude which seemed to belong to a period far other than the present. This feeling at length became so acute, that, in a panic of fear - ridiculous, puerile fear, I forcibly withdrew my gaze of the area and concentrated it abstractedly on the ground at my feet. I then listened, and in the rustling of a leaf, the humming of some night insect, the whizzing of a bat, the whispering of the wind as it moaned softly past me, I detected something that was not right. I blew my nose, and had barely ceased marvelling at the loudness of its reverberations, before the piercing, ghoulsh shriek of an owl sent the blood in torrents to my heart. I then laughed, and my blood froze as I heard a chorus, of what I tried to persuade myself could only be echoes, proceed from every crag and rock in the valley. For some seconds after this I sat still, hardly daring to breathe, and acting extremely angry with myself for being such a fool. With a stupendous effort I turned my attention to the most material of things. One of the skirt buttons on my hip - they were much in vogue then - being loose, I endeavoured to occupy myself in tightening it, and when that was done, I set to work on my shoes, and tied knots in the laces. But this, too, ceasing at last to attract me, I was desperately racking my mind for some other device, when there came again the booming noise I heard before, but which I could now no longer doubt was of firearms. I looked in the direction of the sound and my heart almost stopped.

Racing towards me - as if not merely for his life, but his soul - came the figure of a Highlander, with eyes fixed ahead of him in a ghastly, agonised stare. He had not a vestige of colour, and, in the powerful glow of the moonbeams, his skin shone livid.

He ran with huge bounds, and, what added to my terror and made me double aware he was nothing mortal, was that each time his feet struck the hard, smooth road, upon which I could well see there were no stones, there came the unmistakable sound of the scattering of gravel. But on he came, with cyclonic swiftness. It was all infernally, hideously real, even to the minutest of details: the flying up and down of his kilt, sporran, and sword less scabbard; the bursting of the seam of his coat, near the shoulder. I tried hard to shut my eyes, but was compelled to keep them open, and follow his every movement as, darting past me, he left the roadway, and, leaping several of the smaller obstacles that barred his way, finally disappeared behind some

large boulders.

I then heard the loud rat-tat of drums, accompanied by the shrill voices of fifes and flutes, and at the farther end of the Pass, their arms glittering in the moonlight, appeared a regiment of scarlet-clad soldiers.

At the head rode a mounted officer, after him came the band, and then, four abreast, a long line of warriors; in their centre two ensigns, and on their flanks, officers and non-commissioned officers with swords and pikes; more mounted men bringing up the rear. I could hear the ground vibrate, the gravel crunch and scatter, as enormously tall men, with set, white faces and livid eyes steadily and mechanically advanced.

Every instant I expected they would see me, and I became sick with terror. But from this I was happily saved; no one appeared to notice me, and they all passed by without as much as a turn of the head; their feet keeping time to one everlasting, monotonous tramp.

I got up and watched until the last of them had turned the bend of the Pass, and the sheen of his weapons and trappings could no longer be seen; then I remounted my boulder and wondered if anything further would happen. It was now half-past two, and blended with the moonbeams was a peculiar whiteness, which rendered the whole aspect of my surroundings indescribably dreary and ghostly.

Feeling cold and hungry, I started on my beef sandwiches, when a loud rustling made me look up. Confronting me, on the opposite side of the road, was an ash tree, and to my surprise, despite the fact that the breeze had fallen and there was scarcely a breath of wind, the tree swayed violently to and fro, whilst there proceeded from it the most dreadful moanings and groanings. I was so terrified that I caught hold of my bicycle and tried to mount, but I was unable as I had not a particle of strength in my limbs. Then to assure myself the moving of the tree was not an illusion, I rubbed my eyes and called aloud; but it made no difference - the movement and noise continued. Summing up courage, I stepped into the road to get a closer view, when to my

horror my feet kicked against something. Looking down, I saw the body of a Government soldier, with a ghastly wound in his chest. I gazed around, and there, on all sides of me, from one end of the valley to the other, lay dozens of bodies,—bodies of men and horses, - Highlanders and lowlanders, white-cheeked, lurid eyes, and bloody-browed, - a hotch-potch of livid, gory awfulness. Here was the writhing figure of an officer with half his face shot away; and there, a horse with no head. I cannot dwell on such horrors; the very memory makes me feel sick and faint.

The air, that beautiful, fresh mountain air, resounded with their moanings and groanings, and reeked with the smell of their blood. As I stood rooted to the ground with horror I suddenly saw drop from the ash, a Highland girl, with bold, handsome features, raven black hair, and the whitest of arms and feet. In one hand she carried a wicker basket, in the other a broad knife. A gleam of avarice and cruelty came into her large dark eyes, as, wandering around her, they rested on the rich facings of the Government officers' uniforms. I knew what was in her mind, and - forgetting she was but a ghost - that they were all ghosts - I moved heaven and earth to stop her. I could not. Making straight for a wounded officer that lay moaning piteously on the ground, some ten feet away from me, she spurned with her slender, graceful feet, the bodies of the dead and dying Government soldiers that came in her way. Then, snatching the officer's sword and pistol from him, she knelt down, and, with a look of devilish glee in her eyes, calmly plunged her knife into his heart, working the blade to assure herself she had made a thorough job of it. Anything more hellish I could not have imagined, and yet it fascinated me - the girl was so wickedly fair and shapely.

Her act of cruelty over, she spoiled her victim of his rings, epaulets, buttons and gold lacing, and, having placed them in her basket, proceeded elsewhere. In cases when unable to remove the rings, she chopped off the fingers, and popped them, just as they were, into her basket. Neither was her mode of dispatch always the same, for while she put some men out of their misery in the manner I have described, she cut the throats of others with as great a nonchalance as if she had been killing fowls, whilst others again she settled with the butt-ends of their guns or pistols. In all she murdered ten, and was decamping with her booty when her gloating eyes suddenly encountered mine, and with a shrill scream of rage she rushed towards me. I was an easy

victim. Raising her flashing blade high over her head, an expression of fiendish glee in her staring eyes, she made ready to strike me. This was the climax, my overstrained nerves could stand no more, and ere the blow had time to descend, I pitched heavily forward and fell at her feet. When I recovered, every phantom had vanished, and the Pass glowed with all the cheerful freshness of the early morning sun. Not a whit the worse for my venture, I cycled swiftly home, and ate as only one can eat who has spent the night amid the banks and braes of bonnie Scotland."

The Soldier's Leap

By Rodger Moffet

The end of 1688 saw much discontent with the Catholic monarchy, this was brought to a head when James's wife gave birth to an heir, William of Orange was invited to intervene. When William landed in England James was compelled to flee the country. William was crowned in his place. But not everyone disapproved of the exiled king. Those who supported him were known as Jacobites.

Support for King James was growing in the Highlands, John Graham of Claverhouse mustered support, among men still loyal to the ancient royal house of Scotland. The Macdonals of Keppoch were supporters along with the MacGregors and the Macdonalds of Sleat, Sir John Maclean of Duart and the Veteran Sir Ewen Cameron of Lochiel. The Jacobite forces marched towards Blair Castle, seat of the Atholls, a strategic stronghold controlling several important routes. The Marquis of Atholl was away in England. During his absence Patrick Stewart of Ballachin seized the Castle and held it for the Jacobites.

The Estates had no choice but to confront Dundee, and sent against him an army under the command of General Hugh MacKay of Scourie, a veteran soldier from the Highlands, with 3,000 foot soldiers: his cavalry came by land. After weeks in fruitless pursuit of Dundee, Mackay also marched towards Blair Castle.

On the morning of 27th July Dundee determined to engage Mackay before he reached the castle, marched into Blair: at the same time Mackay's army was making its way through the narrow defile of the Pass of Killiecrankie. The 4,000 government troops scrambled up the Pass on a narrow muddy pathway, where even three men found it difficult to walk abreast.

Watching their laborious progress from the Jacobite side was the renowned Atholl hunter, Iain Ban Beag Mac-rath, who shadowed them until they were within easy range. He had only one bullet and, shooting across the river, killed a cavalry officer near a gully which is still known as Troopers Den.

With only 2,500 men and few horses Dundee desperately needed the advantage of higher ground, then at about seven o'clock on the summer evening when the sun was no longer in the eyes of his troops, Dundee gave the order to charge. The fierce slaughter decided the outcome within two or three minutes. Two thousand men dead, wounded or captured - half Mackay's army.

During the retreat, the only means of escape for one fleeing government soldier was a spectacular 18ft leap across the fast-flowing River Garry. The soldier, one Donald MacBean, recalled the event in a memoir published in 1728:

The sun going down caused the Highlandmen to advance on us like madmen, without shoe or stocking, covering themselves from our fire with their targes; at last they cast away their muskets, drew their broadswords, and advanced furiously upon us, and were in the middle of us before we could fire three shots apiece, broke us, and obliged us to retreat.

Some fled to the water, and some another way (we were the most part new men). I fled to the baggage, and took a horse in order to ride the water; there follows me a highlandman with sword and targe, in order to take the horse and kill myself. You'd laugh to see how he and I scampered about. I kept always the horse betwixt him and me: at length he drew his pistol, and I fled; he fired after me.

I went above the Pass, where I met with another water very deep; it was about 18 foot over betwixt two rocks. I resolved to jump it, so I laid down my gun and hat and jumped, and lost one of my shoes in the jump. Many of our men were lost in that water.

The Prince's Flower

By Rodger Moffet

On the island of Eriskay in Scotland's Western Isles. There grows a small pink flower. Unique to the island this frail little Convolvulus flower has a link with Bonnie Prince Charlie.

Before he reached Glenfinnan to raise the Jacobite standard in 1745 the 'young pretender' first arrived at the island of Eriskay. He had traveled on the French Frigate La Doutelle. The weather was typical for the area and time of year and the small frigate was buffeted by harsh weather. Charles made the decision to land on the island and a small party rowed ashore.

The tiny boat made landfall at a small inlet which has come to be known as 'Coilleag d'Phrionnso' (The Prince's Strand). As the Prince stepped ashore he reached into his pocket and pulled out a handful of flower seeds. These he scattered close to the shore. The seeds grew by the beach and these rare pink flowers grew at the spot. They have come to be known as the prince's flower for this reason. It has been observed that when anyone tries to move the plants from the island to another location they never flourish.

The Prince also brought something else with him which was more than welcome. When he met the MacKinnon's of Skye he gave them a recipe for a whisky liqueur. This liqueur was Drambuie which has become famous all over the world.

Saints and Religious Legends

Some call Scotland 'Gods own country'. With such a wealth of early religious symbolism in places like the beautiful island of Iona, the Celtic crosses that appear all over Scotland, the numerous abbeys and monasteries and of course great saints like St Columba, St Ninian, St Andrew and St Margaret. Scotland has a reputation as a pious country, find out more about or religious legacy...

St Margaret

By Rodger Moffet

It could be argued that St Margaret was Scotland's greatest female character. Born into a time where Scotland was a lawless and dangerous place St Margaret was a great civilising influence on the country and her legacy exists all over Scotland today.

Margaret was born, possibly in Hungary, in 1046. A member of an ancient English royal family, she was a direct descendant of King Alfred and was the granddaughter of King Edmund Ironside of England through his son Edward. The families claim to the English throne was usurped when The English nobility elected Harold Godwin as Edward's successor. Harold famously died at the Battle of Hastings when William the conqueror brought the Normans across from France.

Margaret's mother Agatha realised that as Saxon royals the family was in great danger from the advancing Normans so decided to return to the Continent. However a storm drove their ship to Scotland, where Scottish King Malcolm III took the party under his protection, after much convincing (Margaret was already a profoundly devout religious woman) Malcolm Married her around 1069.

Queen Margaret's influence on the Scottish court was immense, she brought European manners and culture which softened its barbaric reputation. Her greatest influence though was religious with many reforms, founded churches and monasteries including Dunfermline Abbey, put laws in place releasing workers from servile labour on the Sabbath and set up the 'Queens Ferry' over the forth so pilgrims could visit religious centres.

She also changed the language that mass was performed in from Gaelic to Latin. This aligned the church in Scotland closer to Rome but also may have been an attempt by Margaret to bring together England and Scotland and allow closer ties between the countries.

Margaret and Malcolm had eight children. Her time was given up to prayer and religious piety, however this may have led to her early

death as constant fasting and abstinence weakened her (notwithstanding the eight children). In 1093 she fell gravely ill, only to learn that her husband and eldest son had been ambushed and killed at the Battle of Alnwick. She died shortly afterwards aged only forty-seven, her body was buried before the high altar at Dunfermline.

In 1250 Margaret was canonized by Pope Innocent IV, and her relics were moved to a new shrine in 1259. Unfortunately the lot of a saint is such that your earthly body though revered doesn't get a lot of rest. During the Reformation her head passed to Mary Queen of Scots. It later was possessed by Jesuits but was lost during the French Revolution. Reputedly the rest of her relics, together with those of Malcolm, were acquired by Philip II of Spain but were also lost.

The feast of St. Margaret is now observed by the whole Church on 10 June. The Episcopal Church Commemorates St. Margaret each year on the Sunday closest to the anniversary of her death 16th November.

Saint Mungo

By Rodger Moffet

The saint most closely associated with the foundation of the city of Glasgow, St Mungo's true story must lie somewhere between fact and legend.

Mungo's mother was Denw (or 'Tenew' in some versions), his grandfather was a Brythonic king Lleuddun also referred to as King Llew or Loth after which the region of Scotland known as Lothian was named. He ruled an area (as you might expect) around East Lothian. Alas Denw had a guilty secret - she was guilty of having an affair outside marriage with Owain mab Urien who may have been the King's brother (her uncle). From this union Denw fell pregnant and when her father discovered it he had to follow the law of the time (which had many old pagan traditions) and sentence her to death.

Her execution was to be performed by throwing her from Traprain Law, a large hill to the south of Edinburgh. Miraculously she survived the plunge and rather than go through the same ritual her father arranged for her to be cast adrift in the forth is a coracle, a small flimsy boat. Once again fortune smiled on Denw and rather than being washed out to sea she drifted further up the firth and landed on the other side at Culross. She landed on the beach and right on the beach gave birth to a boy - Kentigern.

Once again Denw (and the child) had some good fortune - the small settlement of Culross was home to a religious establishment run by St Serf. He took the boy into his care and began his religious instruction; he also began referring to him by the pet name 'Mungo'. In the language of the time this could either have meant 'my dear heart' or less flatteringly 'my hound'.

After his instruction Mungo left, although some text say he went straight to Glasgow to practice there - there is some belief that he first established a base in Dumfriesshire. This was part of the old kingdom of Rheged, which was ruled over by his natural father. There is evidence to support the fact that this was reconciliation with his own family and also proof of his noble descent (many early saints - such as

Columba, were of noble descent). Alas his situation there was made untenable when the area was conquered by Morken who ruled lands to the south. Urien was murdered and Mungo had to flee. His path led south through Cumbria and on into Wales where he practiced for some time and established many churches on the way.

Meanwhile Morken had been defeated by Redderech who's kingdom lay further north (around Dunbarton) Morken's large kingdom was incorporated into the new and vast kingdom of Strathclyde which stretched from the top of Loch Lomond to the borders of present-day Cheshire. Redderech invited Mungo to return and he complied by establishing an early base at Dumbarton.

Legend has it that one day while out traveling he came across St Fergus who was dying by the roadside. He lifted the old saint and placed him in an oxcart - he then instructed the ox to take the cart wherever God wished. The ox set off and some time later stopped at a site that had been previously blessed by St Ninian. Mungo took St Fergus from the cart and buried him on that spot and then established a church upon it. A large community grew around the church, and became known as Clas-gu (meaning the 'dear family'). Over the years this community grew into the city of Glasgow and on the site of his modest church, the grand Glasgow Cathedral.

In the coat of arms of the city of Glasgow one can see a tree a fish a bird and a bell, these all relate to the life of St Mungo and some to miracles attributed to him, The legend of the fish is however the most interesting.

The story goes that Redderich's wife; Queen Longuoreth had an affair with a young soldier. The king found out and then discovered that the soldier wore a ring which the Queen had given to him as a love token. Incensed, the king hatched a plan to expose his wife's adultery. Redderich took off on a hunting trip accompanied by the soldier, during the trip the King got the soldier drunk and as he slept, removed the ring and cast it into the Clyde. The King then returned home and accused his wife of the affair and demanded that she produce the ring to prove her innocence. When no ring was forthcoming she was thrown into prison and a death sentence pronounced. She was visited in prison by St Mungo and the distressed queen pleaded for his help.

Perhaps the story reminded him of his own ancestry and so he decided to help her.

St Mungo sends for a messenger and tells him to go fishing in the Clyde and bring back the first fish he catches. The messenger returns some time later with a salmon, St Mungo cuts open the fish and there is the ring that had been cast into the river by the King.

Many have considered this tale to be the inspiration behind the story of the affair between Lancelot and Gwennevere, this is compounded by the fact that an almost identical story exists concerning King Maelgwn of Gwynedd and Saint Asaph.

Around 612 or 613 (although some manuscripts claim the date to be even earlier at 603) St Mungo died, the story goes that he died in a bath but other versions of the story say that he caught a cold after immersing himself in water during a baptism service in the middle of January. His body was interred on the site of Glasgow cathedral and his death date of January 13th was made a feast day in Scotland.

The great city that has grown around the bones of this early Christian saint has the motto 'Let Glasgow Flourish'. This relates to St Mungo's famous call of "Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the word"

St Æbbe

By Rodger Moffet

Like many of the early Christian Saints, Æbbe was from royal blood.

Æbbe was the daughter of King Æthelfrith the Ravager of Bernicia and his third wife Acha of Deira. She was also related to St. Oswald and St. Edwin, King of Northumbria. Æthelfrith had become the first king of Northumbria when he had invaded the kingdom of Deira in 604, he had taken princess Acha of Deira as his wife to strengthen his position at the same time deposing Edwin her brother who fled into exile. Into this troubled kingdom Æbbe was born in 615.

At the age of ten her father died and the throne passed to Edwin who had returned from exile. Escaping possible persecution Æbbe fled with her seven brothers to Scotland. They were taken into the care of Dumnual Brec, the King, and were converted to Christianity.

Æbbe took to her new religion with some degree of enthusiasm. Deciding to follow a celibate life she took the veil from St. Finan, Bishop of Lindisfarne. This did not please Aidan, a Scottish prince who had intended to marry Æbbe and he decided to pursue her and take her by whatever means at his disposal ('courting' was not quite as delicate a ritual as it has become more recent times!). Æbbe escaped to a place of safety on a high rock by the sea. As she prayed and Aidan approached the tide came in around the rock, cutting it off from his advance. There the tide stayed high for three days and Aidan took the hint and gave up his attempt at wooing.

Oswiu, her brother decided to give her a site of an old roman camp in County Durham where she could found a monastery. This site was called Ebchester (Aebbe's castle or camp), however her more famous monastery was built on the site of her escape from Aidan further north in Berwickshire. The site was extremely defensible with high cliffs on three sides and a mostly impassable marsh on the other. The site is known as St Abbs Head.

The Monastery was held in high regard, visited by St. Cuthbert, Prior

of Melrose, and Abbot of Lindisfarne.

It is said that Æbbe gave him a piece of cloth as a gift and that the saint treasured the gift so much that he was buried in it. The monastery was also a famous place of refuge, helped by the tidal phenomenon that had also saved Æbbe, St. Etheldreda wife of Egfrith, King of Northumbria escaped there. When Egfrith attempted to bring her back the tide once again flowed into the marsh and sealed off the island. Etheldreda then became a nun under Aebbe's care.

Egfrith soon married again taking Ermenburga as his Queen. Egfrith was also Æbbe's nephew and visited the monastery under a more peaceful banner one evening as he toured his kingdom with his new Queen. However during the night the Queen suffered a severe flagellation and was found in convulsions the next morning. Æbbe immediately identified the cause of the suffering to be the result of their persecution of St. Wilfrid, Abbot of Hexham and Bishop of York. The pair had imprisoned him at Dunbar and Ermenburga had stolen from him of a valuable reliquary which she carried with her wherever she went. After Æbbe's intervention St. Wilfrid was released and his property restored.

The community Æbbe had founded was a mixture on both nuns and monks, this was common in Saxon times but did lead to trouble, human nature and temptation being what it is. Behind her back all manner of antics went on. The cells, which had been built for prayer, were converted into places of revelry, drinking, and other amusements. The nuns would also dress in fine garments rather than their more pious habits which led to greater temptation.

One night a monk called Adomnan had a vision that the monastery would be burned to the ground as a punishment from God. He immediately told Æbbe of his vision and she was greatly distressed, however Adomnan told her that the vision had conveyed that the event would not happen in Æbbe's lifetime. The divine warning also alarmed the other occupants of the monastery and they mended their ways.

Alas their new found piety only lasted until the death of Æbbe in 683,

after this they fell back into their old ways with even greater zeal and whether through fulfilment of the prophesy or perhaps just drunken carelessness the monastery caught fire and did indeed burn to the ground.

Much later, around 1099 another priory was built slightly further inland. Build by Edgar, King of Scots this one was dedicated to three saints; Cuthbert, Mary and St Aebbe.

St Aebbe would have been delighted to learn that in recent years the area around At Abbs head has once again become a refuge of a different sort as a sanctuary for wildlife and in particular nesting seabirds

St Andrew

By Rodger Moffet

On the 30th of November St Andrews day is celebrated across Scotland and indeed around the world. So how did this most eligible of all saints come to be Scotland's patron saint?

Saint Andrew was one of the original Christian Apostles, he was the older brother of Saint Peter. The name 'Andres is though to come from the Greek Ανδρ?ας or Andreas, This was common among Jews living around Galilee at the time. Although not much is known about Andrew the bible stories tell us he was a fisherman and originally a disciple of John the Baptist. He joined Jesus at the same time as John the Evangelist with who he shared a house at Capharnaum. On becoming a follower of Christ he introduced his brother to him and both became his disciples. He was the disciple that pointed out the boy with the loaves and fishes to Christ.

Andrew became one of Jesus' closest followers and after his crucifixion went on to preach across Asia Minor and along the Black Sea coast up into Russia as far as Kiev. This is why Andrew is also patron saint of Romania and Russia. He founded the See of Byzantium in AD 38, later developing into the Patriarchate of Constantinople. There are very few incidents recorded of his time preaching and no recorded miracles. Andrew would have appeared to have lived a simple life.

A legend from the 4th century says that he was eventually crucified at Patras in Achaea by the Black Sea. It is said that he declared himself unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as Christ so asked instead to be crucified on a cross called a Crux decussata (X-shaped cross). This shape has become known as Saint Andrew's Cross. Andrews was tied to the cross ('nailing' was generally not used in crucifixions) and remained there for several days, preaching to those who came to see him.

After his death his relics were moved to Constantinople. by order of the Roman emperor in 357. From there Crusaders stole Andrew's alleged body in 1210 and took them to Amalfi in Italy. His head and

some other parts was removed and taken to Rome in the 15th century where they were enshrined in St Peter's Basilica.

As is the unfortunate lot of saints the 'Relics' ('bones' in other words) tend to be moved around and traded between churches like currency. Some of the relics from Rome were returned to Patras as a gesture towards the Greek Orthodox Church.

There are several opinions on how some of the relics made their way to Scotland. The romantic tradition is that they were brought here by St Rule (Regulus) an Irish monk who had been expelled from Ireland along with Saint Columba. The story going that he landed with the relics in Fife Scotland and the place where he landed took the name St Andrews. There is another theory though that the relics came into the hands of Acca, bishop of Hexham in the 700's and took them north when he fled from Hexham in 732 AD. Sometime around the middle of the tenth century Saint Andrew became Scotland's patron saint. Saint Columba had been venerated before then but it was decided that Saint Peter outranked him and that Peter's older brother would 'trump' the lot! The Declaration of Arbroath in 1320 cites Scotland's conversion to Christianity by Saint Andrew, "the first to be an Apostle".

Andrew is now the patron saint of Scotland, Russia, Romania, Amalfi, and Luqa - Malta. He was also the patron saint of Prussia. The Saltire a representation of the cross of the saint is not only present in the Scottish (and subsequently the Union Flag) but is also the Flag of Tenerife and the naval jack of Russia. The Confederate flag also features a saltire commonly referred to as a St Andrew's cross, although its designer, William Porcher Miles, said he changed it from an upright cross to a saltire so that it would not be a religious symbol but merely a heraldic device.

Saint Andrew is generally pictured as an old man, generally with a book and transverse or saltire cross. Sometimes the image may contain fish, a fishing net or rope or Andrew sitting in a boat.

St Ninian

By Donald Cuthill

Scotland welcomed Pope Benedict XVI for his first visit to Britain on 16 September 2010, on St Ninian's Day. The Pope began his visit in Edinburgh, where a St Ninian's Day parade welcomed him to the city. But who exactly was Saint Ninian, and what was his historical significance? The precise details of Ninian's life are disputed.

The Catholic Church described him as the man from south west Scotland "who first brought the Christian faith" to the country around 397AD, when he is said to have established a religious community at Whithorn in Galloway. The church said Ninian studied in Rome before being ordained a bishop. His monastery in the south of Scotland was known as Candida Casa, from the Latin meaning "White House". The name possibly refers to the stone used to construct it or the whitewash used to paint it, and has survived as the modern name, Whithorn. It was from this base that he is said to have set about proclaiming the Gospel to the southern Picts.

The first historical reference to Ninian of Whithorn came from the Northumbrian scholar and monk Bede, in his Ecclesiastical History of the English People, written around 731. He described him as a Briton who was instructed in Rome and noted that his church was made of stone, which was unusual at the time. Bede said Ninian named his episcopal see after Saint Martin of Tours, although other accounts claim he actually met the French patron saint on his return to Scotland.

The historian conceded he was only passing on "traditional" information in his brief reference to Ninian, and does not claim it is factual. In the 12th Century, Aelred, the abbot of Rievaulx in Yorkshire, wrote A Life of Saint Ninian - thought to be at the behest of one of the new bishops of Galloway, who was eager to promote their bishopric to the wider world. Aelred attributed 10 miracles to Ninian, six during the saint's lifetime and four after his death.

Whatever the truth of Ninian's life, over the centuries his tomb at Whithorn became one of the centres of Christian pilgrimage. It was

also an important place of worship for the Scots royal family. In the 14th Century it is said a dying King Robert the Bruce went there to pray for a cure from leprosy.

Two centuries later, King James IV spent eight days walking to the shrine, and is said to have distributed money to the poor as he travelled.

When the visit of Pope Benedict was confirmed, Scotland's most senior Catholic, Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien, said he wanted to resurrect the festivities that used to surround St Ninian's Day. He suggested organising "a grand Scottish spectacle to welcome Benedict XVI".

The Font Stone of Abriachan

By Amanda Moffet

If you're walking through the Abriachan Gardens by the shores of loch Ness you will come across a heart-shape stone which is deeply embedded in the ground called the Font Stone. The flat rock has a hole in the middle which is filled with water.

The stone is within the Abriachan Community Gardens, if you follow the path up through the gardens to the left it's about 3/4 of the way up. The gardens here are definitely worth a visit if you're in the area.

There is some dispute over the origins of the stone; some associate it with St. Columba, others with St. Finian's monastic cell, whilst some claim it's just a post-hole from a normal house. However, what isn't disputed is the claim that the water hole is never dry, no matter what the weather is like, and if it's emptied then it will refill itself quickly. It is a mystery where the water comes from, but it is believed to have apotropaic as well as healing qualities.

As recently the 20th century, drops of water from the Font Stone were put in the baptismal bowls of newly born babies believing that this would relieve the pain of childbirth, and women would also secretly let their infant have a taste of the magical water before being baptised by the minister at the church. It was thought that the water would help keep fairies away from the child, and pieces of cloth were even kept around the stones, and were later worn by the child as an anti-fairy talisman.

Royal Legends

Ask anyone what they know about Scottish Kings and they may say Robert the Bruce, or even MacBeth. With such a bloody past Scotland's rule changed hands many times whether by design or by force. Some Royal legends are well known bedtime or inspirational tales such as Bruce and his spider. Some stories have been warped by time and literary licence such as Shakespeare's version of MacBeth. But with so many great Scottish kings we have no shortage of great Royal legends.

The Stone of Destiny

By Rodger Moffet

I'm sure most of our readers have either read Dan Brown's book 'The Davinci Code' or at least watched the film of the same name. The connection with Scotland is seen as the story reaches it's climax in the enigmatic Roslyn Chapel. The tale of intrigue surrounding an ancient biblical artefact is a popular subject for storytellers, from the tale's of The Holy Grail and even films such as 'Raiders of the Lost Ark'.

But strangely the story of one such artefact has so far not been turned into a Hollywood blockbuster - and yet it contains more twists and turns than the B869 to Drumbeg, more mystery than the contents of an Aberdonian's wallet. We are of course referring to the Stone of Destiny.

It's difficult to know where to begin with this story - Since it appears to have several beginnings, depending on which version of the legend of its origin you adhere to. So let's begin somewhere in the middle...

The year is 1296 - Scotland has been ravaged by Edward I 'The Hammer of the Scots' He arrives at Scone Palace in Perthshire with his army and drags off a large sandstone block (the metal rings seen on the stone were attached by them in order to remove it). They happily set off for London and have the stone installed under a specially designed throne in Westminster Abbey. This is the Stone of Destiny, a sacred artefact going back through the millennia that had been used in the coronation of Scottish Kings since Kenneth MacAlpin in 843.

Or was it?

The legend of the stone begins in the Holy Land where Jacob used it as a pillow. In the story he falls asleep on the stone and during a dream witnesses angels ascending into Heaven - there is also a story that this stone was anointed and became the pedestal for the Ark in the Temple of Solomon (so that's the 'Raiders of the Lost Ark' reference) so the stone was linked to the Ark of the Covenant.

The stone then travelled through Egypt and was brought to Spain by Gaythelus (the original Gael), A Greek prince. From there it moved to Ireland where St Patrick blessed the stone so that it could be used as a coronation stone for the kings of Ireland. The legend also says that the Stone was accompanied by Scotia a Pharaoh's daughter. From Scotia we get Scotia and so Scotland!

As the settlers from Ireland began to cross over to Scotland to establish the Kingdom of Dalriada the stone came with them. At first setting in Dunstaffnage or Dunbeg. But this was a troubled time with frequent Norse Raids so the stone was moved to Scone where it was safer. And there it stayed until Edward arrived in 1296.

Edward sets off to London with his prize but what did he actually take away, there are some strong suggestions that the monks realising that Edward was approaching made a quick switch - the English had no real evidence of what the stone looked like so the ancient sandstone block could well have been the real thing - except that some accounts say the stone was white marble - others still that it was of a black basalt and that the original stone bore an inscription: "Ni fallat fatum, Scoti quocumque locatum Invenient lapidiem, regnasse tenetur ibidem": "If the Destiny proves true, then the Scots are known to have been Kings wherever men find this stone." There was no such inscription on the official Stone. The fact that this type of Sandstone is indigenous to Perth does suggest that it was switched and that the original was hidden - some say in nearby Dunsinnan Hill. The great joke perpetrated by the monks on the subsequent kings of England is that the stone probably covered a cess pit in the castle so every king of England since Edward's successor right up to Queen Elizabeth has been crowned - perched over an old drain cover!

The Siege of Leith

By Rodger Moffet

Living in Edinburgh you are always aware that wherever you go you are trekking over centuries of history, that you can't walk anywhere without walking on ancient bones. However in our little office in Leith we were completely unaware of the history right under our feet.

King James V died in 1542 when the heir to the throne Mary (Queen of Scots) was only six days old. His Queen Consort, Mary of Guise ruled as Regent until such time as Mary was able to take up the throne. Mary was French with strong family connections so the bond between Scotland and France, the 'auld alliance' was stronger than ever.

This did not please the English and the Protestant movement in Scotland which had been gathering momentum for some time. As the situation worsened Mary called for support from her home nation. France responded and 3000 troops arrived in Leith and set up a garrison there.

English troops, assisted by the Protestant Scottish factions had been camped around the entrance to the River Forth and the French (crack troops fresh from European wars) set about routing them. The French were commanded by Monsieur D'Essé, he quickly realised the strategic importance of Leith and set about building massive fortifications around the town. The French mounted a successful assault on the island of Inchkeith, killing the garrison commander, and returning in triumph. The Scots had mounted batteries around the Leith fortifications and once again the skilled French broke out to attack them. They easily captured cannons mounted on Calton Hill. Fighting raged across Leith links and up onto the higher ground by Hawkhill and Prospect Hill. The protestant Scots began to feel that their God had deserted them. A more convenient excuse rather than the reality that their relatively inexperienced and ill disciplined army were no match for the French.

Gradually though the English and Scottish alliance began to gain the upper hand. English warships blockaded the port and stopped supplies

from reaching the French garrison. Fortified batteries and siege trenches grew nearer to the French positions. Three massive batteries were set up surrounding them; Mount Falcon (near Leith hospital) Mount Pelham and Mount Somerset (situated on high ground to the south of the current Leith links). The constant bombardment wore down the French and the terrified Leithers still living in the town. Despite several successful French raids they were beginning to starve, reduced to eating horsemeat the end was in sight (an excavation in recent times at the bottom of Easter road discovered an old well full of horses heads).

Nevertheless the French had been given orders to defend the town to the last man and no amount of force was going to remove them. The English, tired of the conflict and of the constant jibes from the French ramparts looked for a different route to victory and looked towards their diplomats to settle the issue.

Mary of Guise had fallen gravely ill by this time and Queen Elizabeth's secretary, Sir William Cecil arrived in Leith to negotiate a truce. The Treaty of Edinburgh was drawn up and the French were offered safe passage home with the English also returning south. On the 16h July 1560, the French troops marched out of Leith after sacking it and so twelve years of French involvement in Scotland came to an end.

However the story was not over yet. Mary, Queen of Scots who had become Regent on the death of her mother refused to accept the treaty; this was down to one condition, that she ceased using the coat of arms of England. This may seem a minor point but with her marriage to Lord Darnley, who was grandson to Margaret Tudor Mary's claim to the English throne had become stronger – coupled with the Catholic belief that Elizabeth was illegitimate this made Mary the true heir. Elizabeth never forgave her cousin for this and it became one of the reasons for her execution.

The siege of Leith has to a certain extent been forgotten and regarded as just another incident in an eventful and bloody period of Scottish history however it has great significance. For one thing it was the first time that Scotland and England fought side by side. It could also be considered as the last significant foreign occupation of the British mainland and marked an end to both the alliance with France and

the catholic domination of Scotland.

Robert The Bruce And The Spider

By Rodger Moffet

Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick, was descended from a Norman knight, Robert de Bruce, who came to England with William the Conqueror. His grandfather had been one of the 13 claimants to the Scottish throne in 1291, during the reign of the English king Edward I. Edward had chosen John de Balliol, an English baron, declaring him rightful king of Scotland in 1292. Later, Balliol refused to acknowledge the superiority of the English, and in 1296, was defeated by Edward at Dunbar. Edward then took over Scotland, receiving the oath of fealty from over 2000 Scots. At the same time a nationalistic movement demanding freedom from England slowly began gaining strength among the Scots. Leaders such as William Wallace fought the English but were defeated and executed.

After Wallace's death, Robert Bruce revived his grandfather's claim to the throne, and declared himself king of Scotland in 1306. Edward I sent a large army north, defeated Bruce at the Battle of Methven, and forced him to become an outlaw. But Bruce did not give up, and came out of hiding a year later to win an important victory against the English. Clans from all over Scotland now came to his aid, and Bruce's growing army fought bravely and successfully against the English. Meanwhile Edward I died, to be succeeded by his son Edward II. The new king was no match for Robert Bruce - in 1314, at the Battle of Bannockburn, Bruce's army of 5,000 defeated Edward II's much larger army of 20,000, driving the English finally and firmly out of Scotland.

Robert Bruce was known as 'Good King Robert' and was undoubtedly one of Scotland's greatest rulers, bringing peace and freedom to his country.

On the lonely island of Rachrin, off the Irish coast, stood a mean and miserable hut. The chill wind of winter rattled its wooden door, demanding to be let in, sending icy fingers in through cracks and knotholes in the flimsy wooden walls. Inside, a man, his cloak wrapped close about him, lay on a straw pallet set against the wall opposite the door. A fire smoked in the centre of the rough earthen floor, and the remains of a frugal meal lay on a small wooden table.

The man was no other than Robert Bruce, crowned king of Scotland, made an outlaw in his own country by Edward I, king of England. Edward I, better known as Edward Longshanks because of his long legs, had defeated Robert and harried him and hunted him, forcing him at last to leave the lochs and craggy mountains of his native land. He had left behind his queen in Kildrummie, his only remaining castle, in charge of his brave and valiant younger brother Nigel. But alas, Kildrummie had been taken by the English, his brother executed, and his queen held captive.

Robert was close to despair: was the freedom of Scotland worth the great price that he was paying? Was it worth the lives of all those slain in battle, worth the misery of their wives and orphaned children? And what of all the men that he himself had killed, one at least not in the heat of battle, but in cold blood?

Perhaps, thought Robert, he should give up his fight for freedom and go instead to the Holy Land, there to fight by the side of the brave knights against the enemies of Christendom. Perhaps that would make up for the killing and the deaths that his ambitions and dreams had brought about. Yet, how could he abandon Scotland, while there was still a hope, a chance, however slender, of success?

The wind howled louder; the fire had died down. Robert lay still and silent on his mean straw bed, oblivious of the cold and discomfort of his surroundings, troubled and disturbed by his thoughts. Suddenly his eye was caught by a spider - the creature was hanging by a long silvery thread from one of the wooden beams above his head, and trying to swing itself to another beam. The spider tried again and again, failing every time. Six times, counted Robert, the spider tried and failed. 'Six times,' thought Robert to himself, 'have I fought against the English and failed.'

Robert looked at the spider more intently. 'Now if this spider fails again on the seventh attempt, I too shall give up the fight for Scotland. But if it succeeds, I shall try again.' The spider, as though aware of Robert's thought, swung itself again with all its tiny strength - and finally, on the seventh attempt, it succeeded. It swung on to the beam it had been trying to reach, and fastened its thread, thus

stretching the first line of the web it was trying to weave. Robert Bruce smiled, and sat up. He threw off his despair and grief, and determined to set out for Scotland again and continue his fight against the English. He fought against the English for the next eight years, defeating them and finally driving them out of Scotland in 1314, at the Battle of Bannockburn.

Alexander III

By Rodger Moffet

From a time that predates the great Scottish King Robert the Bruce or even the exploits of Scottish Hero William Wallace there lived a great king of Scotland, Alexander III. A ruler who reigned over a great time of peace and prosperity in Scotland but who's tragic death plunged the country into a great period of upheaval.

Son of Alexander II, and a direct descendant of the first king of the Scots, Kenneth mac Alpin, Alexander was born at Roxburgh in 1241. His father died when he was only eight and the young boy found himself on the throne of Scotland as a child King. In medieval times being such a young ruler was an incredibly dangerous position to be in, however Alexander was fortunate. as an infant a marriage had been arranged between himself and Margaret, daughter of King Henry III of England. Two years after his coronation they were married and the bonds between the two nations became strong.

With such strong marital ties there was little conflict with Scotland's traditional enemy and instead Alexander could concentrate in other areas, in particular Scotland's claim on the Western Isles. The islands had been controlled by Norway since the Norse invasions and after some cunningly timed raids on the isles by the Scots King Haakon of Norway set sail with an invasion force of 200 ships and 15,000 men. Alexander's timing in delaying the invasion through stalled negotiations meant that when the force finally arrived in the western isles they were hit by Autumn storms. Many ships were lost and the remainder were defeated at the battle of Largs in 1263.

Haakon died returning from the battle and in 1266 Haakon's successor concluded the Treaty of Perth which gave the Isle of Man and the Western Isles to Scotland in return for payment. Norway retained only Orkney and Shetland.

Queen Margaret had born him three children between 1260 and 1272 but in 1274 she died. Tragically all three children died within three years of each other and Alexander was left both widowed and without an heir. Realising that to die without a recognised heir would spell

tragedy for Scotland he quickly arranged that his granddaughter Margaret, the "Maid of Norway" be recognised as heir. Nevertheless the pressure to produce a male heir led him into another marriage to Yolande de Dreux on November 1, 1285.

In March 1286 Alexander was taking care of some business in Edinburgh. It was a dark and stormy night when he decided to make the journey back to Kinghorn in Fife where his young wife was awaiting him. The famous Seer Thomas the Rhymer gave dire predictions against the journey and even an old man who met them as their boat landed at Inverkeithing tried to convince the King to stay the night. Alas the allure of his new bride was too strong and he pressed on. As he approached Kinghorn he galloped ahead of his company and almost within sight of his destination Alexander's horse stumbled on the cliff edge and he fell to his death.

Alexander's body was found the next morning, his neck broken.

Alexander's plan for his succession failed when the 3 year old Margaret, "Maid of Norway" died on the voyage to Scotland to claim her kingdom and the country was plunged into a period of great unrest.

Had Alexander lived Scottish history would be very different, While the latter part of the 13th Century and early 14th Century was one of Scotland's darkest periods it also gave rise of course to great heroes such as Robert the Bruce and William Wallace. Without these great men our national identity may have been very different, alas due to one man in a hurry to get home to his wife we'll never know.

The Tragedy of Mary Hamilton

by Donald Cuthill

The well known ballad "Mary Hamilton", or "The Fower Maries" is a sixteenth century song about Mary Hamilton awaiting execution and telling the story of her downfall. Mary was a lady-in-waiting to a Queen of Scots who goes on to have an affair with the King. She becomes pregnant and has a baby, but kills him, either by drowning or exposure, depending on which version you hear. Mary is found out and sentenced to death, and the song ends:

"Yestre'en the Queen had fower Maries

The nicht she'll hae but three

There was Mary Seton and Mary Beaton,

And Mary Car-Michael and me."

It is believed that the ballad is fictional, and the four Marys come from the four ladies-in-waiting chosen by James V's Queen, Mary of Guise, to be companions to Mary, Queen of Scots who succeeded her father at the age of just 6 days old. However, none of these woman were called Mary Hamilton; they were in fact Mary Beaton, Mary Fleming, Mary Livingston, and Mary Seton.

Yet, there was a real Mary Hamilton, whose story and downfall is rather similar to that of the Mary Hamilton in the ballad.

Mary Hamilton was a Scottish lady-in-waiting to the Russian Empress Catherine I. She was a member of a Scottish Hamilton family who emigrated to Russia sometime in the sixteenth century, during the reign of Ivan the Terrible. It is believed that she was the daughter of a William Hamilton. Mary became a lady-in-waiting to Catherine I in 1713, and she attracted a lot of attention around the royal Russian court due to her beauty and love life, and it wasn't long before she became the mistress of Peter the Great. But the Tsar wasn't her only lover, she was also having an affair with Ivan Mikhailovich Orlov, an aide-de-camp to Tsar Peter. However, Orlov had another mistress, and

when Mary found out, she tried to win him back by giving Orlov gifts which she had stolen from Catherine.

Over the years Mary became pregnant on at least three occasions, and had two abortions - one in 1715, apparently by consuming constipation medicine. However, she did have a secret birth two years later in 1717, but afterwards killed the baby by drowning it. That same year her lover Orlov was questioned over some missing documents, and during the interrogation he confessed to having had an affair with Mary, and claimed that she had an abortion.

A rumor was spread that the Empress, Catherine, had a slightly unorthodox skin care method: it was alleged that she would eat wax to make her skin pale. And Mary Hamilton was accused of starting this rumor by Avdotya Chernysheva; Ivan Orlov's other lover. This, unsurprisingly, annoyed Catherine, and she demanded that Mary's room was to be searched. Unfortunately for Mary, her room was where she kept several of the items she stole from the Empress, and when they were discovered Mary and Orlov were both arrested and imprisoned in the Fortress of Saint Petersburg. Whilst in prison Mary not only confessed to the theft, but she also admitted that she murdered her new born child, however, even under torture, she refused to testify against Orlov, despite the fact he had been quick to point fingers at her.

In the November of 1718, Mary Hamilton was sentenced to death for abortion, infanticide, and theft and slander of Empress Catherine. Catherine asked Peter to overrule the death sentence, but he refused. The Tsar did, however, promise Mary that the executioner would not touch her at all, meaning that she would be beheaded with a sword instead of an axe. Mary was executed on the 14th of March, 1719, dressed all in white.

Unfortunately for Mary Hamilton, her execution was not the last indignity that she would suffer. After the decapitation the Emperor went over and picked up Mary's head and gave the gathered crowd a lecture about its anatomy before kissing it and then throwing it down. The Russian Academy of Science were given her head and they preserved it for at least the next 50 years.

Border Reivers and the 'Great Cause'

By Tom Moss

In 1286 Alexander III of Scotland died when his horse was blown over a cliff whilst on his way to Kinghorn in Fife on a stormy gale-strewn night. He was on his way to see his new wife, his second wife, Yolande de Dreux. So ended what is sometimes known as Scotland's Golden Age: an age when peace reigned between Scotland and its southern neighbor England and the country prospered as a result.

Alexander had been a good king and, for the most part, was friendly with his English counterpart, Edward I. Indeed his first wife, who had died, was Edward's sister.

Edward had often demanded fealty from Alexander. He viewed England as the superior race, but he declined forcing the Scottish king to bend to his will. Such was their friendship, cemented by the ties of marriage.

Unfortunately for Scotland, Alexander's children, two sons and a daughter had predeceased him. One of his sons died at the age of nine, the other on his twentieth birthday. He left as his heir a granddaughter Margaret, known to us as the Maid of Norway. She was the child of the marriage of Alexander's daughter, also Margaret and now dead, and the King of Norway.

The Community of the Realm which, following Alexander's death, ruled Scotland through six guardians, was keen to safe-guard the minority of the Maid and thus ensure her succession to the Scottish Crown.

In negotiations with the English king the young girl, about six or seven years old, was promised in marriage to Edward's infant son, the future Edward II. To the Scots it was a move which sought to maintain the peace which the country had enjoyed during the lifetime of Alexander III; to Edward I a means by which he would eventually achieve total domination of his northern neighbor. The agreement was ratified at the Treaty of Birgham.

However Margaret died in Orkney on her way to Scotland from Norway in 1290, some say of seasickness. Her death put an end to any alliance of the two countries by marriage and any consideration that Edward had for the Scots as an independent nation.

It is not known how Edward I became involved in the succession for the throne of Scotland but he was seen by the Scots to be a man who could be trusted to make the right decision. Why should they question his involvement? To that time he had always treated the Scots with fairness. More-over he was well respected. He had the authority, the reason, the power and persuasion. He was perceived as a man with a formidable legal mind, the best in Europe it is said. He would sort the wheat from the chaff and chose the rightful successor from the thirteen claimants, the 'Competitors', who now squared up to each other in their quest to become the king of Scotland.

Edward's involvement would, however, come at a considerable cost. He demanded that the Scots accept that England was superior to Scotland and that he was its Overlord. Indeed before he would begin his deliberations on who should be king he had demanded fealty from the Scottish lords. Most had accepted his dictates, the Bruce included, and signed what are now known as the Ragman Rolls which still exist. One name missing from the Roll is that of Wallace, synonymous now with 'Braveheart', a name that would resound throughout the lands of Scotland within a few short years.

Edward, satisfied that he was about to gain more than a foothold for the Plantagenet dynasty in the lands north of the Border, gathered the thirteen claimants at Norham Castle.

The deliberations on who should be king lasted nigh on two years. They would become known as the 'Great Cause'.

Both countries would suffer as a result.

The two main 'Competitors' for the throne of Scotland were the families of de Brus and Balliol. Eventually Edward chose John Balliol as the Scottish King. He would become a mere 'puppet' in Edward's

hands and eventually rebel in late 1295. In that year Edward demanded fealty from Balliol; demanded that he join the English in their wars in France. It was a move too far for Balliol; As king of Scotland he would not be treated as an ordinary English Baron whose lands were held at the behest of the King. He made an alliance with the French and invaded northern England.

The English Border people were savaged by the Scottish attacks into their lands. Not suspecting any inroads from the north, their lands were devastated by the Scots; crops and houses burned, both people and animals butchered in the merciless acts of retribution from the humiliated Scottish king.

Edward's response was quick and savage. At Easter 1296 he invaded Berwick, then in Scottish hands, and put all to the sword it is said. Tytler, a historian, tells us that 17000 folk lost their lives in the English attack on Berwick. Men women and children, he said, were put to the sword. Whilst this is not true, the population of Berwick in 1296 would be little more than 500, it is an indictment of Edward I's policy of Scottish domination, that he was utterly ruthless in his treatment of the people of Berwick: people who, for the most-part were not in a position to defend themselves.

Thus began the Scottish Wars of Independence with the emergence of William Wallace (Braveheart) and Robert the Bruce.

The Wars would last, off and on, for 250 years. The people on both sides of the English Scottish Border would suffer untold loss for their birthright. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Vast armies of English or Scots would lay waste the lands that they inhabited; their houses, harvests and beasts were razed, burned or stolen to satisfy the hatred of the soldiers of a foreign nation or fill the bellies of an army on the move.

The Border folk lost life, limb and loved one in the relentless surge for domination and were left destitute of the basic needs of life and living.

They were nothing if not hard and obdurate and they reacted in the only way left open to them in such dire circumstances. They stole

where they could, be it from erstwhile friend on the same side of the Border Line or enemy on the other.

The Borderer became the Border Reiver. His dominance of the English Scottish Border lands would last for centuries as feud, blood-feud, murder, death and extortion and blackmail would become the norm; a result of allegiance to the only people he could trust – his clan or family. It seemed, for centuries, that there was no answer to his disreputable activities.

In 1603, the Union of the two crowns of England and Scotland would eventually bring a form of peace to a troubled land. The two nations would be united under one King, James VI of Scotland and I of England. The Border Line from the Solway Firth in the west to the North Sea at Berwick in the east would still exist, indeed it still does to this day, but it would no longer divide two peoples.

The Border country became the Middle Shires of a new United Kingdom.

The Border Reivers were summarily executed, transported to the bogs of Roscommon in Ireland or conscripted to the protestant Low Countries in their fight against catholic Spain. They would slowly disappear from the landscape.

It would take another century but peace would eventually reign in the lands of the Scottish English Border.

James V of Scotland and a Border Widow

By Tom Moss

In 1530 James V, king of Scotland, was a mere lad of seventeen. Freed at last from the clutches of those men who endeavoured to reign in his stead, in his minority, he was determined to prove that he was the real power in Scotland.

One area where allegiance to the clan and its leader came before any deference to royal power was the Scottish Border country. There the clans were a law unto themselves, particularly troublesome and unruly.

Accordingly he moved south from his seat in Edinburgh intent on doling out justice and punishment to those who were of particular notoriety. It is said he had six thousand armed followers.

The history of Johnnie Armstrong of Gilnockie, a power in the Scottish Borders, is well recorded. By subterfuge, some say as the result of a 'loving letter' he was encouraged to wait upon the king at Carlenrig, south of the Borders town of Hawick. There James, incensed by the apparent affluence of the fierce Border Reiver and his twenty-four followers, ordered their execution without trial. Johnnie had fallen into a trap from which there was no way out. He pleaded with the rash, impetuous youth of a king but to no avail. He resigned himself to his fate but not before saying in the Border Ballad which tells his story:-

"To seek hot water beneath cold ice,

Surely it is a great folly-

I have asked grace at a graceless face,

But there is none for my men and me!"

He and twenty-three of his followers were strung up on the spot. The twenty-fourth was burned alive in vengeance for the burning of a poor woman and her son in which he was the instigator.

In time, when maturity replaced the rashness and callowness of youth, James would regret his actions at Carlenrig. He lost any allegiance the Armstrongs of Liddesdale had for the Scottish monarchy on that fateful day in July 1530. In 1542 at the rout of the Scottish army by the English at the Battle of Solway Moss, the Armstrongs withheld their support for the Scottish cause, even harassed the losers as the terrified remnants of the Scottish army fled the field of conflict and headed back north.

James died shortly afterwards. He was about thirty years old.

Before he arrived in Carlenrig in July 1530, James V was determined to mete out the royal justice against two other Border Reivers of particular re-known. One was Adam Scott of Tushielaw, known as the 'King of Thieves'. Not only did he reive both far and wide; he was feared for the way in which he summarily despatched his adversaries. He strung them up from the trees which surrounded his tower at Tushielaw.

He was soon apprehended by the army of James V, and, it is said, hanged from the very trees from which had swung in their death throes many of the Reivers who had contested his bloody and audacious raids.

The other Border Reiver who was the subject of James' ferocity was William Cockburne of Henderland (near St. Mary's Loch). It is said he was hanged over the doorway of his Tower there.

Sir Walter Scott tells us in the 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border' that 'in a deserted burial place, which once surrounded the chapel of the castle (the Tower of Henderland), the monument of Cockburne and his lady are still shown. It is a large stone broken in three parts; but some armorial bearings may yet be seen and the following inscription is still legible, though defaced:-

HERE LYES PERYS OF COKBURNE AND HIS WYFE MARJORY.

The table-topped grave can still be seen on a little knoll of a hill in what was the churchyard of the Tower.

Following the deaths of Johnnie Armstrong and his followers emotions ran high and truth ran second best to fact; an approach handed down to the writers of Scottish Border history of the nineteenth century, including the rightly well-respected Sir Walter.

Perys Cockburne was not the William Cockburne who suffered at the hands of James V. Neither Adam Scott 'King of Thieves' nor William Cockburne were summarily despatched within the confines of their own Towers. Rather they were taken to Edinburgh, tried and beheaded.

Robert Pitcairn (1797 – 1855) compiled the documents which recorded the fate of the Border Reivers who were tried and executed. The compilation is known as 'Pitcairn's Criminal Trials'.

For 1530 he records the following:-

William Cockburne of Henderland, Convicted (in presence of the King) of High Treason committed by him, in bringing Alexander Forester and his son, Englishmen, to the plundering of Archibald Somerville: And for treasonably bringing certain Englishmen to the lands of Glenquhome: And for common Theft, common Reset of Theft, outputting and inputting thereof – SENTENCE. For which causes and crimes he has forfeited his life, lands, and goods, moveable and immoveable; which shall be escheated to the King.- BEHEADED.

ADAM SCOTT of Tuschelaw, convicted of art and part of theftuously taking blackmail from the time of his entry within the castle of Edinburgh, in ward, of John Browne in Hoppraw; and of art and part of theftuously taking blackmail of Andrew Thorbrand and William his brother: and of theftuously taking blackmail from the poor tenants of Hopcailzow: and of theftuously taking blackmail from the tenants of Eschescheill: BEHEADED.

Cockburne, it would seem, was convicted for his alliance with Englishmen which, under the Border Law, was treason, Scott for blackmail which was probably the least of his crimes.

And what of the Border Widow?

One of the most evocative of the Border Ballads is that of the 'Lament of the Border Widow'. It has always been associated with the death of William Cockeburne following his capture by James V. Although this is historically impossible, it admirably portrays the emotion, the futility, isolation and sorrow which followed many a death in the days of the Reivers.

A BORDER WIDOW'S LAMENT.

My love he built me a bonny bower,

And clad it a' wi' lilye flour (all) (flower)

A brawer bower ye ne'er did see,

Than my true love he built for me.

There came a man, by middle day,

He spied his sport and went away;

And brought the king that very night,

Who brake my bower, and slew my knight. (broke)

He slew my knight, to me sae dear; (so)

He slew my knight and poin'd his gear; (escheated to the king)

My servants all did life for flee,

And left me in extremitie.

I sew'd his sheet, making my mane, (grieving and crying)

I watch'd the corpse myself alane (alone)
I watch'd his body night and day;
No living creature came that way.
I took his body on my back,
And whiles I gaed and whiles I sat; (moved, went)
I digged a grave, and laid him in,
And happ'd him with the sod sae green. (covered) (so)
But think not ye my heart was sair, (sore)
When I laid the moule on his yellow hair? (soil)
O think na ye my heart was wae (weary)
When I turn'd about, away to gae? (go)
Nae living man I'll love again, (no)
Since that my lovely knight was slain,
Wi' a lock of his yellow hair,
I'll chain my heart for evermair.

In the reiving times, the 13th to the 17th centuries, the Scottish English Border was a land in turmoil. Endless confrontation and bloody feud spawned a people who were hard both mentally and physically. The 'Lament of the Border Widow' shows another side of the relentless strife which dominated the land of which little is said. Sadness and sorrow followed in its wake.

Scottish Monsters

Nessie! She has to be one of the worlds most famous monsters. Rival to Bigfoot and the Kraken there can't be many people in the English speaking world who don't know who she is. But what of the other Scottish monsters? Many others have been told to roam our land; from kelpies, mermaids and fairy folk to the dreaded Linton Worm. Hear about the many strange creatures that populated Scotland through the mists of time.

Morag The Monster

By Rodger Moffet

"As we were sailing down the loch in my boat we were suddenly disturbed and frightened by a thing that surfaced behind us. We watched it catch us up then bump into the side of the boat, the impact sent a kettle of water I was heating onto the floor. I ran into the cabin to turn the gas off as the water had put the flame out. Then I came out of the cabin to see my mate trying to fend the beast off with an oar, to me he was wasting his time. Then when I seen the oar break I grabbed my rifle and quickly putting a bullet in it fired in the direction of the beast.. Then I watched it slowly sink away from the boat and that was the last I seed of it."

This startling account of an encounter with a strange creature was written in 1969 by William Simpson

You may be forgiven for assuming that this was one of the many tales written about 'Nessie', the Loch Ness Monster, but you would be mistaken, what many people don't know is that Nessie is not alone, she in fact has a sister called Morag. Now having a sister called Morag isn't unusual, I've got one but mine doesn't live in a loch and attack small boats!

Morag (the monster) lives in Loch Morar an inland loch around 70 miles to the southwest of Loch Ness. Separated from the sea by only a quarter of a mile it is much smaller than Loch Ness at only 11 Miles long by around a mile and a half wide. Nevertheless its a large enough body of water to hold a secret. Several accounts exist of strange disappearances on the loch, the cold water can swallow a body never to be given up. Recently large bones were pulled up from a spot near the centre of the loch. At first they were thought to be the bones on Morag (or another of her relatives) but investigation found them to be from a deer. Intriguing how a deer could find itself washed into the centre of the loch, maybe it had come down to the loch side for a drink only to be snatched from the bank by Morag!

Sightings of Morag are rare and photographs rarer still, partly this is due to the situation of the loch, far more remote than Loch Ness with

only a small single track road for access at one side, also the tourist industry has not capitalised on Morag they way it has with Nessie so less numbers at the loch lead to less sightings.

Although there had long been a tradition that something resided in the loch, recorded sightings only began in the 1800s and have numbered around 30-40, however many of these sightings had multiple witnesses and were far more dramatic as the account above can testify.

From the sightings so far the creature does appear very similar to Nessie, having a small head, long neck and large body similar to a plesiosaur but with the ability to raise its head out of the water. Another sighting in 1968 by John MacVarish, barman at the Morar Hotel confirms this:

"I saw this thing coming. I thought it was a man standing in a boat but as it got nearer I saw it was something coming out of the water. I tried to get up close to it with the outboard out of the water and what I saw was a long neck five or six feet out of the water with a small head on it, dark in colour, coming quite slowly down the loch. When I got to about 300 yards of it, it turned off into the deep and just settled down slowly into the loch out of sight. The neck was about one and a half feet in diameter and tapered up to between ten inches and a foot. I never saw any features, no eyes or anything like that. It was a snake like head, very small compared to the size of the neck-flattish, a flat type of head. It seemed to have very smooth skin but at 300 yards it's difficult to tell. It was very dark, nearly black. It was 10am, dead calm, no wind, brilliant sunshine. I saw it for about ten minuets travelling very slowly: it didn't alter its angle to the water. It looked as if it was paddling itself along. There was very little movement from the water, just a small streak from the neck. I couldn't really see what was propelling it but I think it was something at the sides rather than behind it."

The number of encounters was such that the Loch Ness Investigation Bureau expanded its search to include Loch Morar in February of 1970. Several studies have been undertaken, however she is a far more elusive creature than her sister and very little evidence has been recorded by the teams, nevertheless the eyewitness accounts exist;

from small boys on holiday from Yorkshire up to Sir John Hope (Lord Glendevon) a privy councillor and undersecretary of state for Scotland.

So how did Morag come to find her way into the loch? Well as many theories exist as there are sightings. If her ancestors came into the loch from the sea this would have been possible as sea levels were high enough at times for the loch to have been easily reached from the sea, there is also a theory that some mysterious underground tunnel exists between Loch Ness and Loch Morar both of which lie on the same geological fault line known as the Great Glen. It could be that Morag and Nessie are one and the same or at least they pop up and down to visit for tea and a chat now and again. Maybe swapping stories about how many fishermen they've had 'keech their breeks' that week!

Other Scottish Lochs are also said to harbour strange creatures: Among these are Loch Lochy, Loch Arkaig, Loch Oich, Loch Linnhe, Loch Quoich, and Loch Shiel. Although Nessie is by far and away our most famous 'beastie' Morag deserves recognition too. Just remember the next time you are planning a wee paddle while on holiday in the highlands in the crystal clear Loch you have just discovered, that might not just be a few wee fishes nibbling your toes!

The Fear Liath

By Rodger Moffet

The year was 1890 and John Norman Collie, a respected scientist and explorer was walking in the Cairngorms. This area now popular with tourists, mountaineers and skiers was an even more desolate and unexplored spot back then. As he approached the summit of Ben MacDhui, The highest peak in this range and the second highest in Scotland (1309 meters or 4296 feet) he was enveloped by a thick mist that reduced his visibility. While in this eerie mist he had an experience that so terrified him that he did not speak a word of it until 35 years later!

At the 1925 Annual General Meeting of the Cairngorm Club he finally broke his silence:

"I was returning from the cairn on the summit in a mist when I began to think I heard something else than merely the noise of my own footsteps. For every few steps I heard a crunch, and then another crunch as if someone was walking after me but taking steps three or four times the length of my own. I said to myself this is all nonsense. I listened and heard it again but could see nothing in the mist. As I walked on and the eerie crunch, crunch sounded behind me I was seized with terror and took to my heels, staggering blindly among the boulders for four or five miles nearly down to Rothiemurchus Forest. Whatever you make of it I do not know, but there is something very queer about the top of Ben Macdhuì and I will not go back there myself I know."

Having broken his silence Collie discovered that he was not the only person who had experienced something terrifying on these slopes. He received letters from other climbers who had also had this feeling of terror or in some cases who had seen a large dark shape coming towards them on the mountain. This sinister creature has become known as the "Fear Liath" or "Am Fear Liath Mòr" (also known as The Big Grey Man of Ben MacDhui).

In another account from 1943 mountaineer Alexander Tewnion claimed that he had actually shot at a creature with his revolver. He

had been climbing Ben MacDhui when a thick mist descended so he descended by the Coire Etchachan path. He heard footsteps nearby and remembering the account from professor Collie he peered cautiously into the mist. A strange shape loomed up and came charging towards him. Pulling out his gun he fired three times and then turned and ran towards Glen Derry.

From the few descriptions of the creature he is said to be quite large and broad shouldered, standing fully erect and over 10 feet tall, with long waving arms. He is also described as having an olive complexion or, alternatively, covered with short brown hair. However, in the majority of cases the creature is only heard or sensed among the high passes of the mountain. He is most often seen just below the skyline near the Lairg Ghru Pass, walkers who sense his presence are almost always overwhelmed with a sense of dread or terror. In some cases the feeling becomes so intense that walkers are drawn to the dangerous cliff edges almost preparing to throw themselves into the abyss, some say that he is trying to send climbers over the edge of a precipitous drop at Lurcher's Crag.

These descriptions are very interesting as they are very similar to the reported sightings and accompanying feelings reported in North America by those who have witnessed the 'Sasquatch' or 'Big Foot'.

One explanation for the sightings could be an atmospheric phenomenon known as a 'Brocken Spectre'. Named after a mountain in Germany it occurs when the sun at a low angle casts a persons shadow on low lying cloud or mist. However not all sightings could be attributed to optical illusions and the sense of panic and sounds of footsteps were less easy to explain away. Some research has uncovered other sites where this 'mountain panic' has been recorded: Three of these are on the Isle of Skye and other sites have been found at Bennachie near Aberdeen and Allt Innis a'Mhuill, Glen Strathfarrar. There are also sites in England and Wales where walkers have been overwhelmed with feelings of dread.

Whether these feelings sounds and sightings are down to psychological or optical phenomena is hard to prove however one thing is for sure - the climbers who scale this ghostly mountain keep their ears tuned for the sound of the Grey Man of Ben Macdhui

stalking them through the mist!

The Loch Ness Monster

By Rodger Moffet

Returning to Iona from his mission to Christianise the Picts, Saint Columba approached one of the crossing points of the River Ness. There was a small settlement here, and a group of people were digging a grave for a newly dead man. When Columba asked how the man had died he was told he had been killed by a monster who lived in the loch.

This interested the saint but did not seem to worry him, for he let one of his monks, Lugne Mocumin, swim across the Ness to fetch a boat which bobbed against the opposite bank. Celtic monks were a hardy breed and Lugne cheerfully leaped into the water and began to swim to the boat. He was about halfway across when the monster reappeared.

Columba, however, was equal to any monster. 'The blessed man raised his holy hand,' Adamnan, his biographer, wrote, 'while all the rest were stupefied with terror, and commanded the monster, saying: "Thou shalt go no further nor touch the man. Go back with all speed!"' As extra insurance, the saint made the sign of the cross. That was enough for the monster: it fled.

It is over 70 years since the spate of recent sightings began, or at least since the monster became popular in the public imagination. Perhaps the advent of tourism has something to do with it, or the increased use of media coverage so that what was once of purely local importance has become widely known.

If there seems a lot of fuss generated about the possible existence of an unidentified animal in an otherwise obscure Scottish loch, maybe it is better to concentrate on something interesting, unimportant and romantic than on the relentless realities of the world.

It was in spring 1933 that a local couple saw something like a whale on the waters of Loch Ness. The Inverness Courier reported a 'Strange Spectacle on Loch Ness' and from there on Nessie has never looked back. That same year the term 'Loch Ness Monster' was used, and so

the legend was born, or reborn, as the case may be. Every year now, people gather at the lochside, hoping for a glimpse of the supposed monster. Some are lucky, most are not.

At 24 miles long and about one mile wide, Loch Ness has not a huge area of surface water in which to hide a monster, less so a family of monsters. However the loch is deep: about 700 feet on average and far deeper in places; in fact, the loch is so deep it has never been known to freeze. At its widest and deepest point, where the ruined medieval Urquhart Castle presides over the dark water, Nessie most often surfaces. Here the mountains subside and Glen Urquhart gouges deep into the land, a natural lay-by for Nessie.

There is a dramatic photograph of something on the loch around here, with the shattered keep of Urquhart providing both scale and evidence of place. A tree branch perhaps? Or the wake of a boat? Perhaps - and perhaps not.

Not only simple cameras have been used to record the presence of something unusual in the loch. Many types of electronic gadgetry have been used, including sonar, radar scanning and mini-submarines, but all the results seem to have been inconclusive. Vague shapes, formless shadows in murky waters, the detection of what could be a shoal of fish - or something else.

Then, in 1975, came a breakthrough. One of the many research parties from the United States claimed to have photographed a plesiosaur in the loch. Not only one, but an entire family, according to Peter Scott of the World Wildlife Trust, could live in Loch Ness. This created pandemonium in the intellectual world and a debate on Nessie was to be held in Edinburgh.

This was the high point. The meeting was cancelled, the photographs were never published and the discussion reached the House of Commons. Was Nessie being protected? A reply was given when some members of parliament were allowed to study the evidence and, ultimately, Nessie was granted a Latin name, *Nessiteras Rhombopteryx*. This, apparently, means 'Loch Ness marvel with a diamond-shaped fin'. Anagrammatically, it also reads 'Monster hoax by

Peter S'.

Monster hoax? There have been something like 10,000 sightings since Columba's time; the beast has been seen on land and water, it has been chased by motorcyclists and crossed the road in front of motorcars; it has been photographed and traced on sonar. It has been scoffed at by millions. Nessie is part of the legend of Scotland and far too interesting to dismiss as a mere hoax.

The Linton Worm

By Rodger Moffet

Never mind Nessie, the scariest creature ever to roam Scotland was the infamous Linton Worm.

A 'Worm' was another term used for a dragon (orme or worme is the ancient Norse for serpent), and the Linton worm lived in a hollow on the Northeast side of Linton Hill. This area is still known as 'Worm's Den'. From its lair the Worm would roam the land and take its share of local livestock and anything else that fell into its path.

Not surprisingly the local population were terrified of the creature. A 12th century writer described it as "In length three Scots yards and bigger than an ordinary man's leg - in form and callour to our common muir edders." The area became a virtual wasteland and it seemed as if nothing could stop it.

A Scots laird, John de Somerville heard of the worm and decided to go see for himself. From a safe distance he observed the creature, noticing how it would crawl halfway from its lair and stand watching, its mouth wide open while it observed those who came near. This gave the enterprising laird an idea. He returned and ordered the production of a unique lance from a local blacksmith. The lance was longer than normal and had a wheel fitted about a foot from the end. This allowed the end of the lance to rotate on contact.

Somerville returned to the lair with his special lance. On the end he placed a large lump of peat covered in tar which was set alight. For some time he had practiced charging with the burning lance so his horse would get used to the smoke blowing in its face. Now came the time to strike. He rode up to the worm who predictable opened its huge mouth. Somerville plunged the lance deep into the creatures throat.

The Worm writhed in agony, the marks of it's death throws are said to be still visible in the undulations of the hills around the lair (now known as Wormington). eventually the creature brought down the

roof of the cave in which it had lived and (conveniently for all the story tellers) disappeared without a trace.

As a reward for his bravery Somerville was knighted and made a royal Falconer, he also became the first Baron of Lintoune. In commemoration of the event the crest of the Somerville's was a dragon perched on a wheel. The beast is also depicted on the carved Typanum above

The Scottish Bodach

By Amanda Moffet

A Bodach is a mythical spirit or creature, rather like the bogeyman. The word is a Scottish Gaelic term for "old man". Historically its meaning is "mature person", from bod "penis" and the suffix -ach, literally "someone who has a penis".

The bodach was said to slip down the chimney and steal or terrorize little children. He would prod, poke, pinch, pull and in general disturb the child until he had them reeling with nightmares. According to the stories of most parents, the bodach would only bother bad or naughty children. A good defense would be to put salt in the hearth before bedtime. The bodach will not cross salt.

The Kind Scottish Wulver

By Amanda Moffet

Wulvers are often called werewolves, but legend shows they are quite different. Said to inhabit the Shetland Islands off the coast of northeast Scotland. The ancient Celts believed that the Wulver evolved from wolves, and that the Wulver symbolizes the in-between stage of man and wolf. With the head of a wolf, the body of a man, and covered in short brown hair, the Wulver lives alone in a cave. Unlike his werewolf brethren, the Scottish Wulver is considered kindhearted, and he will often guide lost travelers to nearby towns and villages.

The Wulver was frequently spotted fishing for its daily meal from a rock dubbed, 'The Wulver's Stane' (Wolf Stone), and as long as he was left alone, a Wulver showed no aggression. Habitually, this peace-loving creature demonstrated a benevolent side as well, and oft-times was observed leaving extra fish on the windowsill of poor families.

Unfortunately, there isn't much documentation on the elusive Wulver, the last reported sighting being in the early twentieth century. Considering there are few bad stories connected with the beast, many believe an encounter providential, and may lead a person to treasure buried amongst ancient ruins. Conversely, others view Wulver sightings as omens of imminent death.

The Wulver has two legs and is half human unlike a werewolf

Werewolf tales abound, cloaked in terror, wonder and ill will. Therefore, if ever you find yourself lost on the fog-shrouded shores of the Shetland Isles, you'd do well to pray the benign Wulver finds you first, and guides you safely home.

The Green Lady of Crathes Castle

By Amanda Moffet

Crathes Castle historic seat of Clan Burnett. Like most Scottish castles Crathes has it's ghostly tales. The one it's most known for is the withered spectre of the Green Lady who stalks the corridors, putting the frighteners on those she meets. More than that, she is a portent of death.

Whether you are a believer or not in the supernatural, there is a multitude of hauntings in Scottish castles by a green lady; both Thainstone and Fyvie Castle have a resident Green Lady. Perhaps green is the colour of the undead, when their spirit coalesces under the cloak of darkness and its time to raise the pulses of those trying to get a good night's sleep. That said, there are a number of White Ladies too.

Crathes' haunting said to arise from a rather nasty poisoning incident that happened after the death of the Laird. His widow, Lady Agnes was an obsessive mother, whose relationship with her son Alexander was all consuming. Alexander's blossoming romance with a young common girl called Bertha caused no end of emotional ructions.

While her son was away, Lady Agnes poisoned Bertha. Simple as that. A wee drop of deadly nightshade or similar into her evening's claret and away went the problem. Except Alexander found out, and in death, Bertha had driven mother and son apart. Either of these tormented souls are said to be haunt the castle.

Curiously the Green Lady is thought to be neither Lady Agnes or Bertha, and such is the nature of anecdotal evidence, plus the fact that ghosts rarely participate in a census, the identity of the Green Lady is unknown. Some say she is a servant who disappeared in disgrace after becoming pregnant. But who really knows? We'd go an ask her personally, but given her reputation as a portent of death for a member of the Burnett family it is understandable that the family would like her to maintain a low profile.

Scottish Heroes and Villains

Hollywood has immortalised Scottish heroes such as William Wallace and Rob Roy MacGregor (whether accurately or not can be debated). Even some of our less commendable characters have been shown on the silver screen and preserved in literature; Burke and Hare the infamous body snatchers, Deacon Brodie the inspiration for the character of Dr Jeekyll and Mr Hyde and even the cannibal family of Sawney Bean was the inspiration for the horror movie 'The Hills have eyes'. Read more of the commendable and the contemptible characters of Scotland.

The Legend of Sawney Bean

By Rodger Moffet

In recent times the stories of Hannibal Lecter and the real life horrors of Jeffrey Dahmer have provided chilling accounts of cannibalism. However, Scotland can lay claim to one of the most gruesome horror tales ever recounted - the legend of Sawney Bean.

Sawney Bean was born in East Lothian approximately 9 miles to the east of Edinburgh. With all legends dates are rather sketchy but some versions of the tale put his birth around the reign James VI of Scotland. The son of a "hedger and ditcher" he became a tanner by trade. However hard work was not his forte and he eventually decided to give up making an honest living and fled to County Galloway with his new bride. Here they found residence at Bennane Cave, by Ballantrae in Ayrshire.

The cave was a perfect hideout with tunnels penetrating the solid rock and extending for more than a mile in length. Furthermore, twice a day at high tide the cave's entrance was flooded for several hundred metres making it almost impenetrable. From this subterranean lair Sawney Bean hatched his plans for his families future.

With honest labour out of the question he decided to turn to robbery and began to ambush travellers. To ensure he wasn't caught he made a point of not letting anyone he ambushed escape with their lives. Sawney then saw an answer to yet another dilemma; the Bean clan was growing (no doubt through incest) and soon reached upwards of 46 sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters. With so many mouths to feed and a surplus of fresh meat in the form of human corpses he took the horrific decision to resort to cannibalism!

Sawney beans cave Victims were ambushed with military precision by the Bean clan with all means of escape cut off. As many as half a dozen victims could be ambushed at a time. The hopeless victims were killed, dragged to the cave and butchered. What they couldn't eat the pickled and preserved and what they didn't preserve they tossed into the sea. Soon these grim discoveries, including perfectly preserved but decaying body parts were discovered washed up. Alongside this the

number of missing persons in Galloway was rising. To make matters worse many who had gone missing had last been seen at local Inns so the suspicion naturally fell on several innocent innkeepers who were wrongly accused and hanged

Estimates of how many victims met their end at the hand of Sawney's clan vary from several hundred up to nearly a thousand souls.

The fortunes of Sawney Bean and his cannibal family finally took a turn for the worse around the year 1600. The gang attacked a man and his wife travelling back on horseback from a local country fair. A gang of Women dragged the poor unfortunate wife from her horse where she was stripped and disembowelled then as the husband desperately fought off his attackers he witnessed these same women beginning to devour their victim. No doubt finding new strength from the horror he was witnessing the husband fought desperately to escape, finally driving his horse over his attackers. Just at that point a group of 20 -30 returning from the same fair came upon the awful scene. Sawney realising even his gang were outnumbered fled back to the cave. This time leaving the evidence in the form of one mutilated corpse.

The traumatised husband was swiftly taken to see the Chief Magistrate of Glasgow who reported the crime to the King himself. James IV took a very keen interest in witchcraft and so these crimes so enthralled him that he took personal charge and very soon arrived in Ayrshire with tracker dogs and a small army of four hundred men.

Despite their best efforts no sign of the Bean's lair was discovered, that was until the dogs picked up the scent of something very unholy coming from a cave entrance.

Carefully the troops entered Bennane cave and were treated to an almost unbelievable sight. All round the walls rows of human body parts were hung up to dry. all around the cave piles of clothing along with jewelry and other personal possessions from their victims lay - along with piles of discarded bones. The Beans struggled to escape but were vastly outnumbered and around forty-eight of the clan were arrested. Some of the Kings men stayed behind and gathered up what

human remains they could find and buried then in the sands. The rest accompanied the wretched Bean clan to Edinburgh where they were locked up in the Tollbooth.

So severe were the crimes and so clear the guilt that no offer of a trial was given and the very next day they were taken to Leith under sentence of death. twenty-seven men were hung drawn and quartered, a particularly slow and severe punishment where their limbs were cut off and the victims bled to death. The women and grandchildren of the clan were forced to witness this awful spectacle and while they screamed in horror three huge bonfires were built. The remaining twenty-one women were burned like witches.

Clearly a horrific tale but unfortunately one that lacks any sort of supporting evidence. There are no records of missing persons around the time or indeed records of executed innkeepers. Furthermore King James' cameo appearance does make the whole story even more fantastic. Some recon that the story was concocted in the 18th century in a sort of 'Penny Dreadful' or that it was anti Scottish propaganda aimed at countering the Jacobite sympathies. Whatever the truth is the legend of Sawney Bean is still good enough to chill the bones.

Burke & Hare

By Rodger Moffet

The year is 1836 and five young boys are roaming Arthurs Seat in Holyrood park, Edinburgh - hunting for rabbits, what they find defies belief and brings back to the public's attention one of the most gruesome periods of our capital's history.

Buried in a small cave they find 17 miniature coffins - each coffin is only 4 inches long and each contains a small carved wooden doll - made with some expertise. Many theories exist as to what these dolls represented but the one that captured the imagination was their coincidental link to the 17 victims of William Burke & William Hare; The BODY SNATCHERS.

The story of Burke & Hare is fascinating in itself for many reasons, though motivated by greed on the part of the perpetrators, the purpose of the murders and the resulting bodies created a scandal that both shocked the polite society of Edinburgh but at the same time contributed to the city's standing as a place of intellectual advancement in the development of modern medicine.

We go back to the early 1800s - great advances take place in science and medicine is no exception - however research into anatomy is made difficult as the supply of fresh cadavers on which to experiment are hard to come by. Generally only those executed for murder were given up for dissection and with such a voracious demand from the university there just were not enough murderers to go round, ironically an opportunity arose then for two of the best.

Enter William Burke & William Hare, two Irish immigrants from Ulster who had come to Scotland to work on the Union Canal. The pair probably met when Burke moved to a lodging house in Edinburgh's West Port area run by Hare and his partner; Margaret Laird. Burke & Hare could never have been considered of high morals and indeed the area around the West Port was rife with criminals, prostitutes and life's detritus in all shapes & sizes. However they did not suddenly wake up one morning and decide to become Edinburgh's most notorious serial killers - their path to hell was a little less obvious...

The downfall of Burke & Hare began with a simple problem - what to do with a dead tenant who owed you money? In 1827 an elderly lodger of Hare's called Donald had died of natural causes in the night - he had no known family and owed Hare £4.49 in rent. Burke listened to Hare curse his bad luck - then a solution came to them. Poor Donald may have been considered worthless in life but maybe not so in death - the anatomists! And so their new career began; on the day of Donald's funeral they filled his coffin with bark and in the dead of night - wheeled the body to Surgeon's Square where Professor Knox paid them seven pounds and ten shillings and asked few questions regarding how they had come about the corpse. suddenly from four pounds down they were three pounds ten shillings up, not a bad night's work!

The scheme had one drawback though - if they had to sit and wait for the next tenant to pop his clogs they could be in for a wait - even in such a god forsaken place as the West Port! As they eagerly eyed their tenants the next victim presented himself; Joseph Miller was already sick, why not help him on his way a little? no harm in that surely? So one night they plied him with whisky and suffocated the poor man. Since they had now exhausted the supply of sick tenants in the boarding house it was time to look elsewhere. In February 1828 Abigail Simpson, an elderly lady was lured into the lodging house and dispatched in the same style, a smothering technique designed not to harm the corpse which grimly became known as 'Burking'.

Poor Abigail was hardly cold by the time she reached Knox's back door, This was reflected in Burke & Hare's payment for this cadaver when the Anatomist paid them fifteen pounds as she was so 'fresh'.

Over the next year their grizzly trade was carried out from their seedy boarding house.

The victims of Burke & Hare were mostly those on the lower rungs of life's social ladder, those who would not be missed but even in a city the size of Edinburgh not everyone at this level was a complete unknown; The pair had their first close escape when Burke brought back two prostitutes, Mary Patterson and Janet Brown. Brown left

after an argument but Patterson was not so lucky. As her body was uncovered on the dissecting table the next morning a collective gasp was heard among the students. Many students had known Mary...intimately!

Several more victims followed in her footsteps; local characters such as Effie a local beggar along with more of Edinburgh's elderly, poor infirm and immoral including a mother and daughter, Mary Haldane and her daughter Peggy who had been dispatched after arriving at the boarding house looking for her mother. But Mary was to give them yet another scare and arise more suspicion when she was also recognised on the slab.

Still the pair became even more daring - their next victim, young 'Daft Jamie' was a well known local character, and his mother reported his disappearance. His unveiling on the dissecting table was shouts of recognition from students, Knox denied that this was the same boy and realising that the blood was on his hands too in more ways than one set about dissecting the poor boy's face first to ensure no-one would recognise him.

The killing spree of Burke & Hare came to an end on Halloween night in 1828.

Earlier Burke & Hare had argued, Burke had accused Hare and his partner of selling bodies behind his back and Burke and his mistress, Helen MacDougall had set up their own lodging house. On Halloween, Burke befriended a fellow Irish woman Mary Docherty in a local shop, claiming that they were related since his mother was also a Docherty he invited her back to his own lodging house. But Burke had a problem; James & Ann Grey were already tenants in their tiny establishment and Burke knew that murder can be noisy work! Burke paid for the Grays to spend the night at Hares equally infamous home.

The deed was done but next morning Ann Gray returned to collect some items and became suspicious of Burke's behavior. That evening the investigated the house and found Mary's body hidden under a bed in a spare room. The confronted Helen MacDougall who lost her nerve and offered a ten pound bribe to the Grays. The refused and fled to

report the murder to the police but by that time Burke had already been tipped off and by the time the police arrived Mary's corpse was already in the possession of Doctor Knox. An anonymous tip-off led police to Surgeon's Square where James Grey identified the body. It would have appeared that Burke & Hare's fate was sealed.

And yet after months of questioning the courts could not make a strong case against Burke, Hare or their womenfolk. Finally Sir William Rae the Lord Advocate made an offer to Hare, turn King's evidence against Burke and receive immunity from prosecution. The old saying of 'no honour among thieves' was ever more true and Hare willingly confessed all to the police implicating Burke and Helen in all the grizzly murders.

Burke's trial began on Christmas Eve 1828, It was a short trial and he was soon convicted and sentenced to death. Helen's case was not proven and she was released and fled the country to avoid lynching.

On the 28th of January 1829 a huge crowd gathered at Edinburgh's Lawnmarket to witness Burke's 'last drop'. His body was put on public display and was so popular that almost 60 people a minute files past his remains. Then as a supreme irony Burke's body took the same path as so many of his victims to the very same dissecting table, students took pieces of his skin and used it to bind a small book which can be still found along with Burke's skeleton and death mask in the Surgeon's Hall Edinburgh.

Hare was released the following month but there was a public outcry and he fled Scotland. A rumor has it that his identity was discovered and a mob threw him into a pit of lime and blinded him and that he ended his days as a blind beggar in Carlisle. As for Knox the affair had damaged his reputation and although acquitted of any wrongdoing he found himself out of favour in Edinburgh and took up a position at a cancer hospital in London where he died in 1862.

So what of the 17 dolls found years later just a short distance from the scene of their victims dissection. Some discount the connection to Burke & Hare and claim they were connected to some form of witchcraft practice. but the number, 17 is intriguing. some suggest

that the tiny coffins were buried as some form of atonement for the sins of the evil pair maybe by one of their partners or maybe even by Hare himself as a way of maybe giving a final rest to the troubled souls he had robbed of life! Fortunately you can make your own mind up - if you come to Edinburgh go to the Royal Museum of Scotland on Chamber's Street. On the fourth floor you can see the dolls on display.

Jenny Geddes

By Rodger Moffet

Throughout history there are incidents that at the time may seem small or even insignificant, the action of a few individuals who would normally be considered mere spectators in the pageant of history. Some obvious incidents come to mind; The Boston Tea Party or the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand both give rise to a 'butterfly effect' theory of world events.

Edinburgh's very own 'madam butterfly' has become a legend in Scotland's history... the infamous Jenny Geddes.

Jenny Geddes (c. 1600 – c. 1660) was a fruit and veg seller who kept a stall outside the Tron Kirk. Not a person that you would imagine as a significant historical character, but on 23rd July 1637 Jenny Geddes was a catalyst that started one of the most infamous riots in Edinburgh's history.

Firstly some background:

The origins of the incident date back to the accession to the throne of King Charles I in 1625. Charles was not a popular monarch north of the border; in particular the rites used in his coronation angered the more puritan post reformation church in Scotland. The Anglican form of worship was very close to Roman Catholicism and it was seen by many as an attempt by King Charles to bring back Catholicism through the back door. His new archbishop of Canterbury William Laud was also very unpopular in Scotland, but undaunted by the rise of feeling against his reforms Charles and his archbishop assembled a commission whose remit was to produce a prayer book suitable for Scotland that would bring it much more into line with the Church of England. In 1637 a new Book of Common Prayer was printed in Edinburgh, and it was to be first used in St Giles' Cathedral on Sunday 23 July 1637.

The stage was set - enter Jenny Geddes.

There had been some unrest up to the date of the service so it is arguable that many came into St Giles that day ready for a fight. Ms Geddes took her place, not on one of the pews but among the womenfolk who were required to bring their own stools into the cathedral and use one of the aisles. A very nervous James Hannay, Dean of Edinburgh began to read from the new prescribed service to the sound of unruly murmurings from the congregation.

Jenny geddes sat fuming on her "fald stool" or a "creepie-stool" meaning a folding stool. Finally she had heard enough and stood up and cried; "Deil colic the wame o' ye, fause thief; daur ye say Mass in my lug?" meaning "Devil cause you severe pain and flatulent distension of your abdomen, false thief: dare you say the Mass in my ear?" And at that she hurled her stool straight at the Dean's head. This sparked a full scale riot in the church. one congregation member who had been heard uttering a response to the liturgy was thumped with bibles. The Dean took cover and the Provost summoned his men to put down the disturbance. The rioters were soon ejected from St Giles and the Bishop of Edinburgh appealed for calm. However this was not going to end quietly, The Presbyterians of 17th Century Scotland would have made the al-Qaida look moderate! Abuse reigned in from the street outside, windows were smashed and the doors looked to be broken down.

The riots continued on that day throughout Edinburgh, The City chambers were laid siege to with the provost now sheltering inside. Eventually they negotiated a 'truce' of sorts. At the suggestion of the Lord Advocate a committee was appointed known as the Tables to negotiate with the Privy Council. Their suggestion of a withdrawal of the offending liturgy was not surprisingly thrown out by King Charles.

This led to even more unrest including the signing of the National Covenant in February 1638. Later that year the bishops and archbishops were formally expelled from the Church of Scotland, which was then established on a full Presbyterian basis. Charles responded in his trademark arrogant manner by instigating the Bishops' Wars which ultimately led to the English Civil War and the execution of Charles and his Archbishop.

In St Giles Cathedral a monument stands to this unlikely heroine. A bronze 3 legged stool (not the folding stool as described in many accounts) stands to commemorate that day a market trader pawn took the head of a king.

As an aside to the story, around 1787, Robert Burns named his mare after Jenny Geddes in tribute.

Greyfriars Bobby

By Rodger Moffet

Even since the first wild dog came sniffing around a stone age camp fire looking for scraps our relationship with these animals has been a close one. Many stories exist of this bond between man and dog and Scotland has its fair share. However the most famous by far was Bobby - the Skye Terrier.

Bobby first appeared in Edinburgh around the 1850s at the side of John Gray; a shepherd who came to the capital, trading his crook for a truncheon he joined the police force, preferring to herd criminals than sheep! Edinburgh in this time, especially the old town where Gray and his faithful dog patrolled was no place for the feint hearted. The scandal of Burke & Hare were still fresh in the mind and many other notorious criminals stalked the squalid streets of 'Auld Reekie'

Gray found lodging in the Cowgate a narrow cavernous street that runs under the impressive 'Bridges'. The street was given this name as it led down towards the pasture land past the Eastern city walls. As the city had grown this once magnificent walkway had been almost buried by the architecture that sprang up on either side. This was certainly not one of the better parts of the city and any man (and dog) had to be capable of looking after themselves to live there.

The area from the Cowgate westward to the Grassmarket nearby was a popular market with sheep and cattle driven down from the highlands for trade - rustling was common and John Gray and Bobby patrolled this area at night keeping the peace. When his watch ended Gray frequented a small eating house at nearby Greyfriars Place where both were given good hospitality. For many years the two were regular customers. John became known to all as 'Old Jock' and Bobby became a firm favorite of all the children that played around these streets.

However there was one villain lurking in these streets that 'Jock' could not defeat - the poor housing in the old town harboured a number of diseases and John Gray eventually succumbed to Tuberculosis. He was invalided out of the force and died in his lodging house in 1858.

Grey's funeral was attended by a guard of honour from the police force and Bobby marched with the procession up Candlemaker Row to the kirkyard at Greyfriars. Bobby would almost certainly not have been permitted to follow the procession into the kirkyard as dogs would not have been allowed, however at night when he was let out from the lodging house that he had now been adopted in he made straight for Greyfriars - scrambled under the gates and found the grave of his master.

He was discovered the next morning and evicted from the grounds but almost as soon as he was out he found another way back in and resumed his place with determination. this ritual was performed many times before the church elders finally gave up and permitted Bobby to maintain his vigil. He was still a regular at the eating house in Greyfriars place, owned by Mr Traill.

As time passed Bobby's fame spread - visitors to the churchyard would always have a scrap of food for the 'wee doggie' and the patrolling 'bobbies' would nearly always make a detour through the cemetery to pay respects to John and Bobby. Only when the worst of the winter weather gripped the city did Bobby give up his graveside location.

Visitors (any many locals) in Edinburgh have no doubt jumped at the stroke of one o'clock when the one o'clock gun is fired from Edinburgh castle. This long running tradition was used as a time signal, particularly useful for ships in the nearby port of Leith but the signal was also used by Bobby as 'dinner time'. He was frequently joined by William Dow, A cabinet maker who worked at George Heriots School on the other side of the kirkyard. Soon Bobby got used to looking out for his friend and would be waiting for him at the gates when the gun was fired.

So this relationship continued until someone less charitable pointed out to the authorities that Bobby had no license and since no owner could be traced the poor dog was 'arrested'. The mean spirited act caused an outrage. The dog's own free nature meant that it seemed attached to no-one but his dead master so no matter how hard they tried no on person could satisfactorily claim ownership. Students at

the University began collecting towards a license for the dog and William Chambers, Lord Provost of Edinburgh presented Bobby with his own engraved collar with the license attached. Bobby belonged to everyone and had the freedom of the city.

Bobby never gave up his vigil and he finally died in 1872 at Mr Traill's home in Kier Street just to the west of Greyfriars. There is a rumor that he was secretly buried in a quiet corner Greyfriars kirkyard. A stone was later erected near the entrance with this inscription:

Greyfriars Bobby

Died 14th January 1872

Aged 16 Years

Let his Loyalty and Devotion

Be a Lesson to us all

Erected by the Dog Aid Society

of Scotland and Unveiled by H/RH

The Duke of Gloucester G.C.V.O.

on 13th May 1981

Just across from the entrance to Greyfriars there is a more famous monument - the statue of little Bobby himself. He has become one of most lasting icons of Edinburgh and his likeness is as well known as all the famous dignitaries whose monuments pepper the streets of Scotland's capital.

Johnny Armstrong and The Missing Heir

By Tom Moss

The Armstrong Clan has been without a chief for over 450 years, the story behind this is one laced with intrigue, murder, piracy and even hidden treasure. The stuff movies are made from.

The story is set around Johnnie Armstrong of Gilnockie and the Border Reivers in the 16th Century. Johnnie Armstrong was the last Chief of Clan Armstrong. He was popular and powerful, as well as one of the most feared clan chiefs in the Scottish Borders.

The Armstrongs played an active and powerful role within The Border Reivers, a band of raiders along the Scottish-English border from the late 1400s to the beginning of the 1600s. the band consisted of a collection of border clan families from both sides of the borders. The hayday of the border Reivers was during the time of the infamous Johnny Armstrong. James V was on the throne, the Armstrongs held a very uneasy relationship with the Scottish Monarchy to say the least. This culminated in an incident which sent the Armstrong family into hiding, well those that were left after the army of James V wiped out nearly the entire Clan.

Johnny Armstrong had a great number of followers, this in itself would have threatened James V, Armstrong had also amassed great wealth and with wealth comes power. The source of his wealth has caused great speculation, he had disappeared for a number of years returning with many riches, enough to commission his brother to build Langholm Castle. Some say his wealth came from Reiving others say his fortune came from piracy, taken from the Spanish. Johnny was also believed to have been running a protection racket, or what was called back then 'black rent'. He would threaten townships so they would pay protection money to him guaranteeing their safety against The Reivers. There is no evidence where his money came from - but it was well known that Johnnie Armstrong lived the life of a rich, positively flaunting his wealth, this again would have enraged James V.

Armstrong's power and influence was considered an embarrassment to

the Scottish monarchy, the very angst riddled 17 year old King James V became obsessed with this. James V was known throughout the land for his short temper. The Scottish king had already been under some pressure to put an end to the raids that were encroaching south-of-the-border by his English counterpart Henry VIII because they were threatening the peace between the two countries.

The day came when Johnny Armstrong receives a Royal notice from James V inviting him to meet with the royal hunting party at Carlinrigg Chapel. Johnnie rode north from Gilnockie Tower with his men to Carlinrigg dressed in their fine clothes which was to show their wealth and status, believing they would be well received by the king, they were all unarmed. But as they rode over through the valley of Mossbail they were ambushed of the King's army. The Army were said to have been 10,000 men strong, Johnny Armstrong and his men were imprisoned.

It became clear to Johnnie Armstrong that the king had no intention of holding talks, and knowing that his life was in danger he attempted to bribe the king, and even make reassurances that he never killed a fellow Scotsman. But these promises of wealth did nothing for the king and he ordered the execution of Armstrong and all of his men.

In a final act of defiance it is claimed that Armstrong said directly to James these words,

"I am but a fool to seek grace at a graceless face, but had I known you would have taken me this day, I would have lived in the Borders despite King Harry (Henry VIII) and you both."

Johnnie Armstrong and his men (figures range between 24, 36, and 50+) were all taken out and hanged from the trees, and then buried in a mass, unmarked grave. It is believed that Armstrong only attended such a meeting with the King because he had given assurance that he and his men would be safe. In the king's official statement he said the reason for the hanging was because Johnnie Armstrong attended their meeting better dressed than himself which was a public display of disrespect for his King.

History states that one of Johnny Armstrong's sons managed to escape

being captured at Mossbail and fled to England where he settled under a different name. It was not uncommon for some of the border reivers to flee and change their names by either adopting something completely different such as Blackburn or Walker, but they have even been known to have simply just spelt their name backwards to avoid detection. So a blood line of the last Chief of the Armstrongs exists.

Even though over the years a lot of the border families fought amongst each other, even to the point of death, whenever one of them was attacked by an outsider they would stand shoulder to shoulder, united. The death of the popular Johnny Armstrong by James V caused great indignation throughout the border clans. The King's actions were considered underhand and unjust, especially since Armstrong and his men were unarmed, and the King's popularity along the borders hit a low.

The grave of Johnnie Armstrong and his men remained undiscovered until around 30 years ago when a farmer working the field opposite Carlinrigg Chapel overturned a large stone. The stone was rectangular in shape and had unusual markings. The farmer contacted the Armstrong Association who were excited at the thought that he may have found the final resting place of the infamous Johnnie Armstrong. A group of dowsers were brought in and positioned at different points of the field. They all set off, each of them finally came to a hot point at the same place -where the stone sat. An archaeologist arrived to survey the area and a mass grave was found at the point of the stone, which contained a large number of men, and it is generally accepted to be the grave of Armstrong and his men.

The border reivers finally came to an end around the time of the Union of the Crowns in 1603. James VI, the grandson of James V, forcefully put an end to the raids by splitting up the families and deporting them to Ulster, or conscripting them off to Holland, or just executing them.

Since the death of Johnny Armstrong there have been many stories as to what happened to his vast fortune. One rarely spoken story is that it is in fact buried at Langholm Castle, under a point where there is a risen part of the ground where a vault could easily be hidden. What secrets lie under it may go undiscovered but the tale of Johnny

Armstrong will live forever.

Rob Roy MacGregor

By Rodger Moffet

Like much Scottish history the tale of Rob Roy is shrouded in mystery and intrigue. The people of the time were mostly illiterate and stories of the famous battles and legendary characters were mainly passed down the generations by word of mouth, embellished as they went, to provide the great tales to be told around the roaring log fires of the cottages and Glens of the Highlands.

Many of the stories of Rob Roy's exploits as an outlaw became Legends as the Scottish nation began to see him as a 'hero of the common man' who stood up against the land owners who had often been given the title to their lands in recognition of their assistance to monarchs who lived south of the border. The Macgregors, however, must have had more than their fair share of determination, for in circumstances, almost unparalleled in those savage times, they survived and the name of one of the most famous Scotsmen of all time, was a leader of their Clan – Rob Roy MacGregor, the notorious Scottish freebooter. Rob himself would have had no problem with this, for he was never one to hide the light of his countenance under a bushel. And the clan itself, the Griogair, 'the Children of the Mist', would think it only proper that their name should survive and be exalted while their most relentless persecutor, clan Campbell, should be for ever linked – however unfairly – with the Massacre of Glencoe.

Rob Roy has been likened to a Scottish Robin Hood, an outlaw who braved the redcoats, laughed at authority and made Glengyle a Sherwood Forest where only his own people felt secure. The reality is grander, for the MacGregors were more than mere outlaws. Is Rioghaid mo Dhream, they claim, 'Royal is my race', and boast descent from Griogair, son of Alpin, King of Scots in the early ninth century. Malcolm, chief of the clan, fought at Bruce's side at Bannockburn and followed Edward Bruce on his Irish adventure, retiring wounded from the fatal encounter at Dundalk. The rise of the Campbells, who also supported Bruce meant lean times for MacGregor, although the clan endured for centuries.

With Campbell prodding, the Crown ordered letters of 'fire and sword' – legal murder and pillage – against the MacGregors, and the Colquhouns of Luss helped in these raids. This led to MacGregor

retaliation and the battle of Glen Fruin in 1603. Over a hundred Colquhouns were slain, but so were some luckless Lowlanders who had come to watch the fun. It is difficult to feel sympathy for them, for they left the security of their homes in the expectation of witnessing others being slaughtered, only to become victims themselves.

The outcome, however, was equally grim for the MacGregors; by an act of the Privy Council, dated 3 April 1603, the very name of MacGregor was proscribed; all who had taken part in the battle were prohibited from carrying any weapon other than a knife with its point broken or rounded off and could not meet in groups of more than four. The penalty for breaking any of these rules was death.

Amongst themselves the MacGregors, no doubt, used their own names. To sign documents, or to appear to the world outside their own clan, they used the names of neighboring peoples. Campbell, Graham, Drummond, Stewart. The clan remained united; some hundreds fought for King Charles I under Patrick MacGregor of Glenstrae. In gratitude, Charles II annulled the statutes of 1633 against them in 1661, but William of Orange reinstated them in 1693. It was in this new era of persecution that Rob Roy came into prominence.

The Birth of Rob Roy

His mother a Campbell, his father Lieutenant – Colonel MacGregor of Glengyle, Rob Roy was the second son so was never chief of the clan, although he was its captain in time of war. Rob Roy was born around 1671 in Glengyle, and seemed to be fairly law-abiding in his youth – for a MacGregor – although this could be disputed. There is a story about the village of Kippen when Rob Roy was supposedly a lawful cattle-drover. This would be around 1691, when William would have just been made king.

Rob Roy was droving 200 cattle to the tryst (market) at Buchlyvie, crossing the fords of Frew on the way. How he came by the cattle is arguable, but perhaps he was working honestly for his living at the time. When he came to Kippen all that changed, for the temptation of the villagers' cattle was difficult for any Highlander, brought up on

tales of reiving and raiding, to resist. Rob Roy swept through the place, driving everything movable before him.

At the fords of Frew, one of the few places where the huge Flanders Moss was passable, Rob Roy was caught by a party of dragoons from Cardross but he used the land and his MacGregors to panic them. What the good folk of Kippen thought of all this romantic thievery is not mentioned in the legend. No doubt they laughed heartily at the antics of that jolly outlaw, Rob Roy, as they looked at a bleak and hungry future. Shortly after, Rob Roy married Mary MacGregor of Cromar, his second cousin and a match for him in every way. Perhaps it was the responsibility of marriage which quietened the wild streak in him, for he seems to have returned to droving for some years, borrowing money from the Duke of Montrose to keep himself solvent. In this he made a mistake, for it was a major cause of subsequent events; this, the fact he was a Jacobite in an extremely disturbed Scotland, and the proud MacGregor blood which flowed through him.

When Rob Roy discovered he was bankrupt in 1712, he slipped into the hills until the matter passed over. Montrose sent Graham of Killearn, his factor, with a body of men to Rob Roy's house in Inversnaid at the head of Loch Katrine (loch of the caterans, or thieves). Rob Roy was not there, but his lands were seized, his houses plundered and his wife and children evicted in midwinter. To any man this would lead to anger, but there would be little they could do. Rob Roy MacGregor was not just any man and his wife was as implacable as he.

From that day, Rob Roy and his clansmen waged an open war of attrition on the Duke of Montrose and Graham of Killearn, his factor. The duke's estates spread to the Highland border, temptingly easy to raid, and Rob Roy vowed they would keep him in cattle until his last day. He kept his word. The raids began, and so did the legends.

Graham of Killearn was Rob Roy's principal target; once, Rob Roy found him at the inn at Chapel-darroch (then a township, now shrunk to a farm) and quietly kidnapped him. The factor was taken to the shores of Loch Katrine, thrown on a boat and rowed to Eilean Dubh at the head of the loch. Here Killearn was held until Rob decided to let him go unharmed; for Rob Roy was no killer.

On another occasion, the factor was collecting rents at the same inn when Rob Roy looked through a window and observed him. Killearn was placing a bag of money in a cupboard, claiming he would give it all way for Rob Roy's head. At this time Rob Roy had only one man with him, but he shouted commands to a score of imaginary followers and boldly entered the inn with his sole companion. After forcing Killearn to write a receipt to each tenant, Rob Roy used the factor's money to buy food and drink for all his company, warned Killearn to sit still for an hour and left the inn.

Rob Roy, however, was more than just a taunter of Killearn. He was a blackmailer, of the original kind where blackmail meant payment to prevent cattle being taken, and any man of property or wealth could be a victim. The Campbells suffered: Sir Colin Campbell of Aberwehill and Kilbryde was blackmailed, although his son, James, was bold enough to refuse payment. Rob Roy waited until James was at dinner with a gathering of friends, rounded up the Kilbryde cattle and demanded payment or he would take the lot. The shamefaced laird had no option but to pay up.

In the middle of his career, Rob Roy had a diversion as the Jacobite rising of 1715 erupted. Captain of the clan, Rob Roy led his followers to the battle at Sheriffmuir, arrived late and halted at the Allan Water. Here he stayed, his MacGregors a disciplined guard as the Highlanders of the left wing withdrew from Argyll's redcoats. Not a heroic part, but the battle was already lost and his first responsibility was to his clan, not to a man who might be king.

There were other brushes with the redcoats. For instance, the time when the Glasgow volunteers marched north to claim a 1000-pound reward Rob Roy had on his head – and fled at first sight of the MacGregors. There was the near-forgotten rising of 1719 and the battle in Glenshiel where 300 Spaniards surrendered. There was the encounter at Duchary Castle when Rob Roy slipped out the back door while Graham sister kept dragoon officers amused at the front.

There was also the fort built at Inversnaid. Traces of this building still remain on a hillock overlooking the Snaid and Arklet Water, but it

had a very difficult task. Twice before it was built, Rob Roy destroyed it, and the redcoats stationed here, with wild MacGregors watching their movements, must never have let their hands stray from their muskets.

That fort was the only one built in the Highlands in this period; together with the roads designed by Wade it was intended to quell the Highlanders, of whom Wade had said, 'and the MacGregors on the borders of Argyllshire. They go out in parties from 10 to 30 men, traverse large tracts of mountains until they arrive at the Lowlands ... they drive the stolen cattle at the night time and in the day remain in the mountains or in the woods, with which the Highlands abound, and take the first occasion to sell then at the fairs and markets that are annually held.'

The Gallow Lee; The Monsters in the Mortar

By Rodger Moffet

A few years ago I read James Robertson's excellent book; 'The Fanatic'. The book tells the story of an Edinburgh tour guide and how he becomes obsessed with the gruesome character he portrays. In one passage of the book the character mentions a place called the 'Gallow Lee' an area just beside Leith Walk in Edinburgh where all manner of executions were carried out. I recently came across some more information about this place and its real history was even more ghastly than the fictional account.

Leith Walk is a ribbon of Shops Café's and bars that runs from the east end of the city centre to the historical port of Leith. The origin of this thoroughfare goes back to the time of Oliver Cromwell and his attempts to capture the city. In order to repel his attacks Sir Alexander Leslie in command of the Scottish Army created a 'breastwork'; a chest high defensive earthwork wall as part of the city defences. This wall ran northwards from the city centre down to the shore. The defences were incredibly effective and Cromwell was held off till after his victory at Dunbar.

In time buildings began to spring up along the line of these defences, a gravel path was laid down and coaches would ferry people to and from the port. Leith Walk was born!

At around the halfway point, just where the traditional boundary where Edinburgh and Leith meet is an area called Shrubhill. This was a sandy hill on the western side of the road. Being outside the city boundaries this was the city of Edinburgh disposed of its more troublesome problems!

In 17th century Edinburgh public executions were a common spectacle. But sometimes there was a problem where a person sentenced to execution was either too high profile or for one reason or another there was concern that the execution may cause unrest. In some cases the manner of execution was too much even by 17th century standards. Edinburgh chose the Gallow Lee in Shrubhill to deal with its dirty business. A permanent 'gibbet' was set up on the hill

and on most days a body would be seen swinging from it. Witches were put to death, sometimes mercifully strangled before being burned and as the years progressed the ashes of the dead added to the sandy mound.

Covenanter executions were a frequent site too and there were a few high profile scandalous murderers who were put to death on the Gallow Lee: There was the Reverent John Kelloe for example; a respectable minister from Dunbar who had murdered his wife. Another very notable 'customer' was Norman Ross, a footman who had murdered his employer Lady Baillie, sister of the Laird of Wedderburn. For around two years his rotting corpse was left to swing on the gibbet being picked at by crows.

Until halfway into the 18th century this ghastly landmark stood on the route into Edinburgh. However the draining of the Nor loch and the expansion of the city to the North led to a new period of development. Stone was quarried from nearby Craighleith quarry to build the fashionable 'New town' The builders looked for a source of sand to add to the lime mortar and hit upon the Gallow Lee. The owner of the land charged the builders to cart away the sand, containing the ashes and other remains of thousands of victims. It is said that every penny he earned went straight to the local publicans – so much so that a public house (the halfway house) sprung up nearby!

Soon the sandy mound of the Gallow Lee was gone and all that remained was a hollow. As I write this the site of the Gallow Lee is once more waste ground, formerly occupied as a bus depot now awaiting redevelopment. But how many of those living in the trendy apartments in Edinburgh's New town realise that the very fabric of their building is bound together with the remains of Witches, covenanters and criminals?

The Cannibal Earl of Drumlanrig

By Rodger Moffet

While sitting on the steps outside Edinburgh's 'Dynamic Earth' visitor attraction the other day our family were admiring the view over to the Scottish Parliament building. My wife pointed to the older whitewashed building that nestles in the heart of the new parliament complex and asked me if that was part of the parliament too. The building in question was Queensberry House. Not knowing a great deal about it I called up the internet on my phone to find out more. Little did I realise that this innocent looking building would hold such dark secrets!

Queensberry House was built in 1667 for Dame Margaret Douglas of Balmakellie. It was bought a few years later by Charles Maitland, 'Lord Hatton' and then sold again in 1689 to William Douglas, the 1st Duke of Queensberry. The first Duke's daughter died in the house under horrific circumstances; her apron caught fire, causing her terrible facial injuries from which she died.

When William died in 1695 the estates passed to his eldest son James Douglas who became the 2nd Duke of Queensberry. James was either an incredible shrewd political operator or was incredibly naïve, As Lord High Commissioner for Scotland between 1700 and 1703 he sided with the Jacobites, leading to his resignation. But then in 1705 he pops back into political life, reinvented as Keeper of the Privy Seal. In 1707 he orchestrates the Act of Union and Scotland's days as an independent nation are ended.

But James had a dark secret and on the very night the act was signed a terrible and ghastly crime would shock the nation and shame the name of Douglas.

The Duke's eldest son James was referred to in many peerage records to have 'died young' there is very little mention of him at all and with good reason. James Douglas, Earl of Drumlanrig was completely insane! From childhood he was kept under lock and key in a ground floor room in Queensberry House, the room with windows boarded up and kept in permanent darkness. He was a large brutish boy of great

strength and incredibly dangerous.

On the night the Treaty of Union was being signed the city was in uproar! Some were celebrating but many more were rioting! The Duke, perhaps he was celebrating the vast sum that was going to come his way for his involvement in the negotiation of the act or perhaps he was trying to escape the mob, either way he was well away from Queensberry house that night. Fatefully so were most of the staff and most importantly so was the valet charged with the responsibility of watching after the young Earl.

The Earl managed to break out of his room and began to wander the empty house in a lust of hunger and rage. He stalked around the huge mansion for some time until the smell of cooking drew him to one of the many kitchens. There he fell upon a young kitchen boy, quickly overpowering him he proceeded to take the poor child and attach him (by means we will not go into here) to a spit and roast the body over the fire!

It was some time before his escape was discovered and by the time he was tracked down to the kitchen the mad Earl had already devoured parts of the body of the servant boy.

Despite the Duke's best efforts the story leaked out, a nation already shocked at its betrayal but these so called Nobles was dumbstruck by such an act barbarism and the 'Cannibal Earl' was never seen in public again. He was spirited off to England and died there a few years later. The Duke had another problem though, James was the eldest son and as such was the rightful heir to the Dukedom, more swift political and constitutional engineering contrived that this passed to his second son, Charles on his death.

But the story didn't end there – was there a curse on the name of Douglas? Charles married Catherine Hyde who was also prone to acts of eccentricity bordering on insanity too. She had a vile temper and hated Scotland and the Scots, when in residence in Queensberry House she would deliberately dress like a peasant girl to ridicule her Scottish guests. Their son was also afflicted by the family madness and one day in 1754 while on a journey to London he rode in front of the

coach carrying his mother, produced a pistol and shot himself dead.

The fortunes of the house fared little better: in 1801 the house was sold by the inheritors of the Queensberry title. Stripped of all its decoration it was given away for the meagre sum of £900 and turned into government barracks, by 1853 it had become a refuge for the destitute and the adjoining lodge was used for 'the reception and treatment of female inebriates'.

So was there a curse on the Queensberry's? Many say the terrible act's of the 'cannibal Earl' were a judgement for his betrayal of the Scottish People for his parcel of English gold. There is one older legend however that suggests a much older curse upon the family. On the day and hour of the death of the first Duke in 1695 a Scottish skipper who was at that time in Sicily swears to have witnessed the sight of a flaming coach and 6 horses driving up the side of Mount Etna and disappearing into its fiery caldera. As it passed he heard a diabolical voice cry out:

'Make way for the Duke of Drumlanrig!'

The Death of the Great Lafayette

By Amanda Moffet

A century ago, The Great Lafayette was the highest paid performer in the world. But in the middle of his show, on the 9 May 1911, a fire began in the theatre. Trapped on the stage, Lafayette died, as the theatre burned to the ground. This was the Edinburgh Empire Palace Theatre, on the very same site now occupied by the Edinburgh Festival Theatre.

The finale of this final performance was the 'Lion's Bride' which involved the use of tapestries, cushions, tents and curtains to create an Oriental setting. An African lion paced restlessly in a cage while fire-eaters, jugglers and contortionists performed. A young woman in Oriental dress walked slowly on stage and entered the cage. When she was inside, the lion roared and reared up ready to pounce. The animal skin was then suddenly ripped away to reveal The Great Lafayette who had mysteriously changed places with the lion.

As The Great Lafayette took his bow a lamp fell amongst the scenery which instantly caught fire, the audience (3,000 people) escaped as the band played the national anthem. The safety curtain on the stage came down, everyone on the stage and backstage were killed in the fire. Lafayette had actually managed to escape but returned to save his horse, Amazon. As well as the horse, a lion and ten performers including a child who performed illusions in a bear outfit lost their lives this terrible night 100 years ago.

The festival theatre is said to be haunted, people have heard Lafayette's voice and also a lion's roar. A few days before Lafayette's death his beloved dog had also died and is said to also haunt the theatre; Beauty, Lafayette's dog was a gift from the great Harry Houdini. It is buried in Piershill Cemetery, where Lafayette would later join him. She was the object of The Great Lafayette's affection, and was famously spoiled by the man of mystery, treated to velvet cushions, diamond-studded collars, five-course meals and even his own room.

But it was this indulgence which was to put an end to Beauty's life when, during his stay in Edinburgh, he died of apoplexy, a condition caused by over-eating.

Distraught, The Great Lafayette negotiated a formal burial for his pet at Piershill Cemetery, agreed on the condition that he too would be buried there when the time came – which was sooner than he anticipated.

The body of Lafayette was soon found and sent to Glasgow for cremation, however two days after the fire, workers were clearing the under stage area and found another body identically dressed as Lafayette. It turned out that the body in the crematorium was that of the illusionist's body double. Two days later the ashes of the Great Lafayette were taken through Edinburgh witnessed by a crowd estimated to number over 250,000 before being laid to rest in the paws of his beloved (and stuffed) Beauty at Piershill Cemetery.

Evil Laird Pringle and the Haunting of Buckholm Tower

By Amanda Moffet

One evening in the 1680s, as the light was starting to fade and the colour of day drained away turning everything to grey an ominous dark character was seen striding over Ladhope Moor with two large dogs. He was seeking covenanters who he was sure were holding an assembly meeting somewhere nearby. His shiny black eyes searched for tracks as he listened for signs as to where they were hiding. He knew they were there somewhere it was just a matter of time before he found them.

He was the renowned Laird Pringle of Buckholm Tower, an ardent Royalist, hater and torturer of covenanters.

His hunch as usual was correct and he found evidence that this was indeed the spot which the covenanters had used. But it was deserted. They had recently, and in some rush, fled the scene; obviously they had been warned that he was closing in on them. Nearby Pringle spots the body of a man lying hurt on the ground, he recognises him straight away, it's George Elliot, the well-known covenanter. He had been injured after being thrown from his horse. With him is his son William, who had stayed to look after him. Their faces full of fear watching helplessly as Pringle and his growling dogs approach.

Pringle was ordered not to kill the men on the spot but to take them captive overnight so they could be interrogated the next day. Pringle was furious with this decision. The pair were locked in the cellar of Buckholm. Later that night Pringle was roaring drunk and seething with anger at being made to do this. He wanted their blood, the kill should be his. His rage grew till he decided to take matters into his own hands and stormed the cellars. Pitch dark down the cellar - servants gathered upstairs peering into it to see what all the noise was hearing scuffling, then screaming, then nothing silence.

Meanwhile the wife and mother of the prisoners - Isobel Elliot had arrived at Buckholm demanding to see the men and make sure they were being treated fairly. She knew of Laird Pringle's blood lust and feared for their safety.

The Laird still covered in the blood of Geordie and William sees her approaching. He desperately wants her to witness the aftermath of his savagery, see what he's done. He jumps out and drags her down the cellar. In a small pool of light the lifeless bodies of her husband and son hang from meat hooks. Their flesh torn and their bodies beaten to a bloody pulp.

Isobel was distraught, furiously she cursed Pringle for killing her family, and from that night until the day he died one June, Pringle was adamant that he was being chased by hounds that were invisible to other people.

During the nights before the first anniversary of his death, the laird's ghost was seen running towards the tower, with the baying cries of the hounds reverberating behind him. And on the night that he died and every June thereafter, cries and running footsteps were reported to be heard, not outside the tower, but from the depths of the cellar. Had his terrible deeds finally caught up with him?

In nearby Melrose Abbey graveyard stands a stone bearing the name George Pringle, aged 78 years.

The date of death on the headstone reads 5 March 1693, making it possible that this is the laird in question's grave.

Buckholm Tower today is largely ruined, though the best preserved room is the cellar, where the iron hooks featured in the story can still be seen.

In 2005, paranormal research team Spectre carried out three investigations at Buckholm Tower. The team reported temperature changes, the sound of footsteps and recorded video footage of the iron hooks moving. They also claim to have taken an audio recording of an indistinct voice, and when they asked whether laird Pringle was present, the voice is believed to have said: "I had to" or "I hate you".

Buckholm Tower remains a favorite among ghost hunters, many are convinced that something evil lurks in the remains of the tower's cellar, even claiming that if you look closely you may see faint blood stains on the wall. Maybe the spilled blood of Geordie and William?

Hobbie Noble of the Crew

By Tom Moss

On the English Scottish Border in the reiving times, nominally from the 13th to the 17th centuries, when the Border Reivers disputed all authority, national identity was often dismissed. Joint raids by the forces of Scots and English, all animosity to each other put aside for a while, resulted in a lucrative pay-off for the clans and families involved in the grand theft of cattle and sheep. The Border country was beset with the intrigues of the Reivers; local law enforcement on both sides of the Border at a loss, reticent to lay the blame for crime at anyone door, careful of reprisal or lasting feud.

The story of Hobbie Noble of the Crew, one of the English Border Reivers of somewhat dubious renown, is one such example of Scots and English coming together. He would aid the Armstrongs of Liddesdale, a Scottish Border clan, in their hour of need, yet eventually be betrayed by one of their own.

Hobbie Flees to the Scottish Borders.

Hobbie was from Bewcastle in what was known in his time as the Waste of north Cumberland; his home was Crew Castle. Little of what would once have been a formidable tower remains today; the earthworks, however, easily recognised, bear testimony to a place of formidable strength: the home of a family of prominence and importance in the region. The Waste is still there to this day. It is a harsh and unforgiving country yet delights in little pockets of sylvan beauty which are a delight to the eyes.

Hobbie spent many years raiding in Tynedale (Northumberland) and even parts of his homeland, to the south of his Cumberland fortress. It would seem that allegiance to his countrymen was of little concern to a man bent on raiding wherever the opportunity presented itself. The product of theft, the 'reive', meant more to Hobbie than allegiance to his own countrymen, his own people.

Eventually they disowned him as they tired of the retribution exacted

on them by the surnames (families) he had raided within his own country and the clans to the north of the Border. Their lives were dominated by the relentless raids from Tynedale, other parts of Cumberland, and southern Scotland which, with regular monotony, raided the homesteads of the folk of Bewcastledale.

He was much prized by the English West March Warden, the law in Cumberland. Doubtless there were many crimes laid at his door in which he had taken no part.

Hobbie fled to Liddesdale in the Scottish Borders where he was well received by the Laird of Mangerton, head of the Armstrongs. Anyone on run from the law, irrespective of nationality, was welcomed by the Armstrongs of Liddesdale.

Hobbie is True to his Scottish Hosts.

When Jock Armstrong of the 'Side', a stalwart and leading member of the Scottish clan was captured and thrown into gaol in Newcastle to await a fate which would inevitably see him dangle at the end of a rope, Hobbie was a major force in planning and achieving his rescue. He was lauded by the Armstrongs of Mangerton for the sterling part he played in the rescue of Jock but there were other Armstrongs, within Scottish Liddesdale, who resented the popularity of the Englishman.

Hobbie is asked to lead a raid into England by the Armstrongs of the Mains.

Sim Armstrong was Laird of the Mains, today a peaceful farm in Liddesdale, but in the days of the Border Reivers, the most dangerous valley in the whole of Europe. Sim had grown to hate the great English Reiver whilst the English Warden was bent on wresting Hobbie from the Scottish Border lands and bringing him to account for his crimes in England. Sim and the Warden made a deal whereby, in return for English gold, Sim would betray Hobbie into the Warden's hands. Accordingly, on the pretext that Hobbie knew the English ground better than he did, Sim persuaded Hobbie to lead a raid south

of the Border into England. The cattle and sheep were fat and ripe for the picking.

Hobbie is betrayed by Sim of the Mains

Hobbie led the Armstrongs of the Mains into England but at the same time Sim Armstrong sent word to the English Keeper of Askerton that Hobbie was back on English ground. Hobbie and the Armstrongs had rested overnight before their final assault on their target. At the first light of the following day Hobbie woke to see the English confronting him. He was not unduly concerned because he knew the ground right well. His fertile mind instantly recognised the path in which he and the Armstrongs could evade any confrontation. But it was not to be. The Armstrongs at his back suddenly voiced their allegiance to the English and Hobbie was betrayed for gold.

Askerton Castle.

Hobbie is bound and taken to Carlisle

Hobbie was bound with his own bow-string and led ignominiously to Carlisle and thrown in the dark damp cells of Carlisle castle. He was told he would hang next day unless he would confess to stealing Peter of Winfield's horse, a crime that had hung over his head for some time. There is some doubt that Hobbie was involved, that the charge was trumped up by the English to see an end to the great English Border Reiver. He denied the allegation and prepared himself for death. Next morning he was hanged. There was a lot of sympathy in the watching crowd for the man who had risked life and limb to rescue Jock of the 'Side' from the Black Tower of Newcastle.

Sir Walter Scott, avid lover of Scottish English Border history and eminent writer of the early nineteenth century gathered the story of Hobbie Noble and committed it to verse in his 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border'.

Here are two particularly poignant verses from the ballad:

'And fare thee weel , sweet Liddesdale, (weel = well)

Baith the hie land and the law;

Keep ye weel frae the traitor Mains,

For gould and gear he'll sell ye a' (goud = gold, a' = all)

'Yet wad I rather be ca'd Hobbie Noble, (wad = would, ca'd = called)

In Carlisle , where he suffers for his fau't, (fau't = fault)

Than I'd be ca'd the traitor Mains,

That eats and drinks of the meal and maut'. (maut = malt)

English Gold was no benefit to Sim of the Mains

When the Laird of Mangerton, head of the Armstrongs, heard of Hobbie's fate and Sim's involvement, he was furious. Normally, as Hobbie was executed by the English, his retribution would have been aimed against the English families who dared to steal in his domain, Liddesdale or its surrounds. For once he directed his wrath against his own. He planned a great reprisal against the Armstrongs of Mains even though they were a sect of the clan. Sim fled to England but within two months, thanks to intelligence furnished to the English by Mangerton, Sim of the Mains also dangled at the end of a rope on Harrabee Hill, the killing ground of Carlisle. No tears were wept by a crowd who were pleased that he had got his come-uppance for the betrayal of Hobbie Noble of the Crew.

Jamie Telfer of the Fair Dodhead

By Tom Moss

Jamie Telfer lost all when raided by the English of Bewcastle. His despair would change to delight when help from the Scotts of Teviotdale brought him an unexpected gain.

English Reivers Raid

Bewcastle lies just south of the English Scottish Border; the remains of a once formidable castle still stand as a stark reminder that it had been a dangerous place to live in times gone-by. The Bewcastle Waste was a hunting ground of the Scottish Border Reivers and a direct route for them in their relentless raids into Northumberland, in particular Tynedale. The castle was well garrisoned in an effort to thwart the Scots as they headed for the Tyne valley.

Late in the sixteenth century the Captain of Bewcastle ventured forth to teach the Scots a lesson. Reprisal was on his mind as he sought to counter the many inroads into England of the Border Scots clans.

The Fair Dodhead

High in Ettrickdale, a lovely Border valley on the Scots side, once stood the home of Jamie Telfer. Here he lived with his wife and bairns in a somewhat isolated location. The family had little in the way of possessions, and as for many another Borderer of the time, life was harsh. They had only ten cattle and but a meagre smallholding of land which proved hard to tame to provide for almost all their needs. Yet they were happy in their lot; they asked for nothing but to live in peace and tranquillity in their little parcel of heaven.

The Captain of Bewcastle and his marauding band soon came upon the scene and, having gauged the lie of the land and the absence of close neighbors, laughed raucously at their good fortune. They saw only easy pickings.

The clash was but a scuffle; Much as the parents strove to combat the

superior English force they were soon overcome, left face down in the mire as their children looked on in howling distress. The Bewcastle horde had soon made off with Jamie's little herd.

Jamie Seeks Help from the Reiving Clans.

After the English had left, Jamie ran the ten miles to Stobs Castle and sought the help of Gibby Elliot, a man of power in the neighborhood. Elliot would have none of it because Jamie did not pay him blackmail. Blackmail was rent paid for protection against the more powerful reiving clans of either England or Scotland who made their living at the expense of the weak and defenceless: men who could not call on the aid and succor of a powerful overlord or clan chief. Elliot suggested that Jamie move on to Branxholme as it was to the Laird there that Jamie paid his blackmail. In despair, Jamie then ran from Stobs to Branxholme where he received a fairer reception.

Scott, the Laird of Buccleuch and Branxholme had very soon called out his neighbors at Goldielands, Harden and Allanhaugh, also by the name of Scott. Together they rode hard to intercept the English before they should reach the Rutterford, a passage across the river Liddel that led into English ground.

The English, slowed by the ponderous pace of the beasts, were eventually caught up with, still on Scottish ground.

A Border Reiver Skirmish

In the ensuing melee a Scottish reiver named Willie was felled when his head was clove in two by an English sword. Wat Scott of Harden swore revenge and roused the Scottish party by his audacity and aggression. The Captain of Bewcastle was to come off badly when his leg was broken by a massive sword swipe onto his upper thigh. This, it is said in the ballad of Jamie Telfer, rendered him 'useless' to a woman for the remainder of his days. The Scots soon retrieved Jamie's cattle.

The Scottish Reivers Move into England.

A Scottish Reiver by the delightful name of Watty with the Wudspurs suggested that, as they were near the very Border Line, the Scots should move on to Stanegarthiside (pronounced Stingerside) on the English side and chance their luck at the Captain of Bewcastle's home there. This they duly did. After breaking down the door of the barmkin (a wall, high and thick, which surrounded the tower), they soon outfought the English garrisoned for its defence and made away with some of the Captain's cattle.

A Poor Man's Despair Turns to Delight.

After leaving Branxholme Jamie had made his way home slowly to the Fair Dodhead, lost in wretched thought. He found his wife and bairns forlorn and in despair, huddled together in a corner of the single room that once was filled with laughter but now succumbed to a cheerless state. He was taken aback by the sorrowful sight and soon joined their wailing. What would tomorrow bring, what was their future?

Imagine the relief then when the Scotts of Teviotdale soon brought home their ten beasts. The relief turned to delight when Jamie counted thirty- three kine (cows), twenty-three of which had formerly been pastured at the home of the Captain of Bewcastle.

The Captain must have rued the day he ever looked at the Fair Dodhead. Loss of cattle and manhood was a poor return for a reive which had set out with such high expectations.

An Afterword

There is more than one rendition of this story. From the 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border' by Sir Walter Scott to the Child Ballads and other versions whose sense is now lost. The location of the Fair Dodhead has never been conclusively proved. There is certainly more than one site with the name in the Scottish Borders. Different versions also cast a shadow over who aided Jamie. Was it the Scotts of Teviotdale or just

maybe the Elliots of Stobs?

The original ballad, now lost, was certainly tinkered with down the years as the Scotts and Elliots endeavoured to prove their magnanimity. It matters little now. It is a stirring story of the days of the Reiver.

Brave Little John MacAndrew

By Tom Moss

John MacAndrew also known as Ian Beag Macandra was the most excellent archer that the Highlands or probably Scotland has ever produced. Tho not tall in stature he was brave at heart, he was known as Little John MacAndrew. There are many tales of heroic deeds, most about fighting off cattle thieves. I have managed to collect two of these stories.

The Killing of the chief of Clan MacKintosh.

In the mid 17th century, John MacAndrew joined forces with the Rose of Kilravoch who was pursuing Mackintoshes who had plundered Rose's cattle. In the ensuing battle in Strathdearn, Macandrew killed the Chief of the reivers with an arrow. Macandrew knew that the reivers would want their revenge and follow him home. Later, when John saw strangers in the woods near Dalnahaitnach he guessed they had come to avenge their Chief's death.

The strangers, thinking John was just an ignorant young lad, offered him a bribe to take them to Ian Beag Macandra's house (his own). John took the bribe. When they reached his house, John's wife was in and with great presence of mind, carried on the deception and told the strangers that her husband was out . She gave the strangers food and drink and sent John out to look for the master.

John climbed to the top of a tree near the door of his house. In the tree he kept a bow and a supply of arrows. He cried out that the master IAIN BEAG MACANDRA IAIN BEAG MACANDRA was coming. The strangers hurried out one by one and as they did, John shot each one down with an arrow.

Little John Saved By His Cunning Wife

A party of the Lochaber men laid watch, one winter's night, unobserved and unexpected around John's house, and when they

thought they had bird in the cage, abruptly and unceremoniously walked in. One of the Lochaber men locked the door after him and hid the key under a turf bench, in the side of the house.

It was John's wife, who saved her husband at this critical moment by the following stratagem. She went to the pantry at the far end of the house, and took a small number of kebbocks of cheese in her arms, and pretended to slip over as she came in through the entry door. The cheeses rolled all over the floor, and the Lochaber men flew after the spoil. The valiant John, who was all the time a spectator of what was going on, now rose from his seat, swept the light off the hearth, took the key from it's hiding place, went out and locked the outer door after him. On doing this he placed the hide of a newly killed cow at the door, with the flesh side turned up. The Lochaber men guessing their mistake, forced open the door, and as they came out slipped on the newly flayed hide. John was now ready with his bow and arrows, as each man fell on the hide, the arrow from John's bow prevented the possibility of his rising to tell the tale.

John managed to outwit the reivers for the rest of his life; his life was an ongoing tale of many hair-breath escapes, honest and brave little John MacAndrew ultimately died quietly in his bed.

A Monument to Iain Beag Macandra was erected in memory of his great skill and cunning with the bow. It stands on the North side of the river Dulnain at Dalnahaitnach.

MacAndrews remains lie in a churchyard of Duthil, it is believed a stone marks his grave. There is supposedly no doubt about his burial place. He lies amongst his kith and kin where there is no chance if his foes now disturbing him.

John Ross - The Scottish Cherokee Chief

By Donald Cuthill

John Ross was considered one of the greatest chiefs of the Cherokee tribe, having been chief for nearly 40 years from 1828 to 1866, the year of his death. However, John was not how many would have imagined a typical 19th century chief of a Native American tribe to be like. In fact, Ross was politician and a business man, and he was the son of Daniel Ross, a Scottish immigrant trader who settled with the tribe during the American War of Independence, and Mollie McDonald, who was of mixed Cherokee and Scottish blood - her father being an immigrant from Inverness.

Ross fought most of his life for the rights of his Cherokee tribe; most notably fighting against the forced move of the Cherokee nation from their lands in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, and North Carolina to the Indian Territory (present day Oklahoma), in the western United States. He was elected principle chief of the Cherokee Nation by free ballot ten successive times, holding the position until the day he died.

John Ross grew up in both Cherokee and frontier American environments. However, he came from a relatively affluent family, and so he was able to receive a more than decent education from private white tutors. This allowed him to become the sort of chief he was. Many of the older chiefs from before were not educated to anywhere near the same standard as Ross, and so could not protect and defend the Cherokee interests as well. Ross grew up having experienced both worlds. His time amongst the Cherokee gave him an understanding of their culture and their language, and his education gave him the ability to understand the complexities of negotiating with politicians and a national government, and so was more than capable of taking on his political foes. Principal Chief Pathkiller saw in John Ross a future leader, and so went about training him for the position.

Unfortunately, one of the Cherokee tribe's most notable foe was President Andrew Jackson, a strong advocate of the Indian Removal policy. Ross did have some influential allies in Washington, however, including the Commissioner for Indian Affairs (1824-1830), Thomas L. McKenny, who described Ross as being the Moses of the Cherokee

nation, who "led...his people in their exodus from the land of their nativity to a new country, and from the savage state to that of civilization."

In the January of 1827, both Principal Chief Pathkiller and his predecessor, Charles Hicks died, leaving William Hicks, Charles' younger brother, as interim Principal Chief. Though during that time, it is said that John Ross was the real power broker. Many within the tribe were worried that, with the deaths of Pathkiller and Charles Hicks, the time of the Cherokees was short, but Ross and others believed that in order to save the Cherokee and prevent a forced move, legal action would be needed, as would turning the tribe into a recognised nation. It was to have its own constitution, which was modeled on the United States' one, even including a Senate and House of Representatives. In October 1827 the constitution was ratified, though not coming into effect until the October of 1828, at which point John Ross was elected as the first Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, a role he would be continually elected into until the day he died.

Over the following years Ross continued to fight with the white Americans, who were trying to displace his people, but used the power of words rather than weapons. There were some favorable court rulings when battling with local authorities, but in the end when seeking for Federal protection it was ultimately denied, and in 1830 President Jackson authorised the Indian Removal Act which saw the Jackson administration starting to put real pressure on the Cherokee, amongst others, to move. When Jackson was re-elected in 1832, some within the tribe saw it as an inevitability that they were going to be displaced, and so sought out the best arrangement they could get for the Cherokee Nation from the US Government. In the end, 500 (out of tens of thousands) of the Cherokee backed a treaty to leave their land in exchange for \$5,700,000, and the land in Indian Territory. Despite the fact that this agreement was not signed by a single elected official, and not supported by nine-tenths of the tribe, the US Congress ratified the removal treaty on the 23rd of May, 1836.

Between 1836 and 1839 saw the removal of the Cherokee from their lands in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, and North Carolina. Ross tried in vain to overturn the removal treaty. In 1838, Jackson's successor, Martin van Buren sent US Army and state militia, totalling around

7,000 men, to forcefully remove any men, women and children at gunpoint who hadn't already left, and send them on their way west. This forced removal came to be known as the "Trail of Tears" - a term used to refer to the removal of all Native American tribes at this time. The 2,200 mile journey saw many lose their lives from the cold, illness, and exhaustion, including John Ross' own full-blooded Cherokee wife, Quatie, of whom not much is known.

Ross was given permission to help supervise the move, to make sure that his people were looked after, and make the transition as smooth as possible. Though that was not enough to prevent many of his people dying en route. Estimates of how many of the Cherokee died on their mass removal vary, with numbers ranging between 4,000 and 8,000.

Principal Chief John Ross remained solely focused on the interests and protection of his Cherokee tribe even after the move. The Cherokee people were ardent supporters of him, trusting the Scottish Ross with the future of their culture and their society for 40 years, which was something he fought to protect even to his last days.

The Beaton Doctors of Mull

By Amanda Moffet

The Beatons of Mull, the famous 'Ollamnh Muileach', were a family of doctors, whose origins can be traced back to Béthune in France, and are said to have been very talented with a rather unique medical ability.

They family were hereditary physicians first to the Lords of the Isles, and then to the Macleans of Duart, but they also performed an informal medical service to the people throughout the whole area.

It is claimed that the very first Beaton doctor, a young man who assisted a highly skilled Irish doctor, gained his ability as a medical practitioner by accident. Whilst helping create a magical potion, which included brewing a white snake and a hazel stick brought from Mull, a drop fell onto his hand and immediately this young Beaton transformed into a talented doctor.

It is also said that this Beaton managed to save the life of a chief of Lochbuie in a rather unique way who was suffering from a particularly serious throat abscess. He put together a potion in the presence of the chief which had a very unpleasant potent taste to it, and asked some people who were also present to taste it. The facial expressions of each one who tasted the mixture caused the chief to go into an uncontrollable fit of laughter which strained his throat enough for the abscess to be broken up, and save his life.

It is said that only once was this doctor unable to diagnose a medical problem. Unfortunately for him it was his daughter who was ill, and despite Beaton's ability he could not prevent her death. A post-mortem was carried out, and the girl's death was put down to the live frog found in her stomach. The frog was kept alive and fed a number of different foods which were non-harmful to humans to see what effects they would have on it, in an attempt to find a treatment for any future cases. The frog eventually died when one day it was fed some nettle soup; a simple cure which left the doctor distraught because he did not think to try it when treating his daughter.

However, it is said that he managed to save another young girl's life with this treatment after she swallowed a tadpole which went on to grow into an adult frog. Legend has it that he was able to diagnose the condition simply by the tone of her singing voice.

From Campbell's *West Highland Tales* it tells of three brothers, Gilleadh, Fergus, and John. Gilleadh was an expert herbalist, Fergus specialised on Islay, and John, whose grave is on Iona, was said to be the most talented doctor, and was Mull's chief practitioner. People were aware of John's ability all around Scotland, and news of it even reached the king in Edinburgh who demanded to meet with him. The king had invited all of the country's best doctors to the capital where he would test them and see which one was superior to the rest.

In order to assess them the king did one simple test: he feigned an illness and challenged the doctors present to identify what was wrong with him, and then prescribe an appropriate remedy. All the doctors took the task with extreme seriousness except from John Beaton who could see through the king's act and correctly called his bluff. The king, so impressed with Beaton's intuitiveness immediately proclaimed him the best doctor in the whole of Scotland. Jealous, John's rivals slipped some poison into his food whilst he was heading back to Mull. However, these rivals completely respected John's talent as a doctor, and so to make sure that the poison took its full effect, they removed anything from his possession that they thought could be used to create some sort of antidote. The poisoning was successful and John was unable to do anything about it.

Not far from the Free Church at Pennyghael on the Isle of Mull is a monument in the form of a cairn with a stone cross mounted on top to commemorate the famous Beaton doctors of Mull. Inscribed onto the side is 'GMB 1582 DMB'. Apparently these are the initials of the most prominent Beaton doctors.

Adapted from Peter Macnab's "Traditional Tales of Mull".

Thomas the Rhymer

By Donald Cuthill

Thomas Learmonth from Ercildoune (now Earlston), better known as Thomas the Rhymer was a 13th century Laird, poet and a supposed prophet.

Legend tells us how Thomas the Rhymer went out walking one day and fell asleep beneath a tree on the side of the Eildon Hills. He awoke to find a shining woman sitting on a grey horse at his side. This woman turned out to be the Queen of the Fairies. It was of no coincidence that they met, as it was Thomas that the queen sought to meet. Thomas was struck by the Queen's beauty and immediately fell in love with her and she asked him to kiss her, right under his favorite Eildon tree. The Queen asked Thomas if he would go back with her to the Land of the Fairies to be her lover and he agreed.

Thomas stayed with the fairies for what felt like three days, but was in fact seven years.

When he left the Queen, as a sign of her love for him, she gave Thomas the gift of poetry, of always speaking the truth (which apparently Thomas protested against), and the gift of prophecy.

Thomas made a lot of predictions, which he put into rhyme, about significant events that were to happen to Scotland.

Some of the prophecies attributed to Thomas the Rhymer:

"On the morrow, afore noon, shall blow the greatest wind that ever was heard in Scotland."

This apparently predicts the death of Alexander III in 1286 who died the day after Thomas said it. The Scottish king was killed on a stormy night when travelling from Edinburgh Castle to see his queen in Kinghorn, Fife, and it is believed that his horse lost it's footing in the dark and the king was found the following morning on the shore with

a broken neck. Alexander died without an heir.

"At Eildon tree, if yon shall be, a brig ower Tweed yon there may see."

From the Eildon tree that Thomas is talking about you can now, in fact, see a bridge which crosses the river Tweed.

Other supposed predictions that were made by Thomas which have since come true are the succession of Robert the Bruce to the Scottish throne; Scotland's decisive loss to the English at the Battle of Flodden Field in 1513, at which Scotland's James IV was killed; and he foresaw the union of the Scottish and English crowns which occurred in 1603. Thomas allegedly said that when the Tweed flooded into Merlin's grave, Scotland and England would have one king. Initially it seemed that this prophecy had turned out incorrect, but on the day of James VI's coronation the supposed grave of Merlin in Drumelzier flooded with water from the Tweed.

Thomas went on and lived the rest of his life in the real world, until one day when it is said that Thomas finally went back to see his lover in the Land of the Fairies after he went out for a walk and was never seen again.

In the 17th century, a Scottish Learmonth settled in Russia, and the famous 19th century Russian romantic writer and poet, Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841) claimed to be a descendent of this Learmonth. Lermontov was thought of as the most important poet in Russia after the death of Alexander Pushkin in 1837 and it has been claimed, however never proven, that Lermontov is related to Thomas the Rhymer.

Legends of the Clans

Nearly every clan has a legend, the 'Seannachie' or Bard would keep these legends alive, passing them down through the generations. Clan legends have become part of Scotland's rich folk lore. With so many inter clan feuds its not surprising that stories of bravery or betrayal have have sprung up.

The Grey Dog of Meoble and Clan MacDonald

By Amanda Moffet

There is an old legend which dates back to the early 1800s telling of a large dog with a rough grey coat and an unearthly wailing bark that appears to descendants from the Morar MacDonalds at the point of death.

The tale begins with a young Highlander called Dugald MacDonald, the young man owned a deerhound which he loved very much. Like other young men at this time Dugald was called off to war. He was away from his home and his faithful dog for several years. When finally he returned home his neighbors told him that his beloved dog had left home and was living wild on an island in the middle of a small loch, high among the hills. Also in the time he had been away his deerhound had given birth to four pups. The pups were now almost fully grown. Dugald was warned that due to their lack of human contact they were so savage that it was unsafe to go anywhere near them.

Dugald ignored the warning and set off to visit the hill-loch, the only way to get to the island was to swim. Dugald desperate to be reunited with his dog swam over to the island. When he arrived on the island he managed to locate the dog's lair in the heather. The deerhound was away and her pups, on hearing him approach, emerged and tore him to pieces. When the deerhound returned and saw what had happened to her master, her howls of agony brought the folk of the glen to the scene. The pups were speedily hunted out and killed and Dugald's body was laid to rest in the little burial-ground at the mouth of the Meoble River.

Legend has it the deerhound began a lonely and pathetic vigil, frequently waking the neighborhood with her mournful howling as she watched over her master's grave, until one day she was discovered lying stretched out dead beside it.

For long afterwards the story of her watch over the grave was talked about through the district, but gradually, with the passage of time, it was largely forgotten, until one of Dugald's brothers became seriously

ill at Rifern, a small crofting township lying across the river from the grave-yard. One night the ghost of the deerhound appeared at his bedside. It looked at him for several minutes, then gave a terrible cry and disappeared. A little later the man died. The spectre of the Grey Dog had made its first appearance.

Another account of the ghostly deerhound appearing happens to an old Highland lady who lived in Glasgow in the early 1900s and whose family were closely related to the MacDonalds of Meoble. The old woman lived alone, confined to her room for many years and a friend who lived across the street was in the habit of calling each day to attend to her needs. On one occasion as the friend was leaving the flat, a large dog, of a type she had never seen before, passed her on the stairs. She thought no more about it until the following day when, much to her surprise, she saw it again, this time lying on the old lady's doorstep. With difficulty she pushed it aside and went in. In the course of the conversation, she happened to mention the dog. Her friend sat up in bed her eyes alight. When asked to describe the dog she replied:

"it was very large, around the size of a Shetland pony, it was grey with a long curly tail."

"Ah!" exclaimed the old lady with a smile of contentment on her lips. "The faithful friend – she came at last." And with that she sank back on her pillow and passed away.

The Repentance Tower

By Rodger Moffet

Hoddum Castle in Dumfriesshire is one of those places that have a special significance in our families own history. It was here that my mother and father first met while both were stationed there at the end of World War II when the castle was used as a military camp. The castle was never occupied again after the war and has gradually deteriorated to the point where it has become dangerous and the grounds are now home to a sprawling caravan park. A short walk out from the grounds and up a nearby hill takes you to the enigmatic 'Repentance Tower' which once stood on the castle's estate. The tower and the small graveyard it stands in yields some interesting stories about the people who once owned Hoddum Castle and the surrounding lands.

The first curiosity is in its name "Repentance Tower". Dating from around 1560 local legends suggest that it was built by Baron Herries as a form of atonement for cutting the throats of some English prisoners while on a stormy crossing back over the Solway Firth and dumping the bodies at sea.

Another version of the story however has gained more credibility:

During the mid 16th century warfare between Scotland and England was common over this disputed border land. In the 1540s the English had captured Dumfriesshire and forced many to become 'assured Scots' pledging allegiance to England and giving up hostages to help them keep their promises. Among these Assured Scots was John, Master of Maxwell. Maxwell had an eye on Agnes Herries and the lands and title that he would inherit on marrying her. However as long as he sided with the English this could never be. At the Battle of Durisdeer Maxwell had turned out for the English but the signal of a black flag was given to his men and they turned against their English allies. The Scots were victorious and the English fled back to Carlisle. Maxwell won the maiden and the title of Lord Herries but paid a heavy price as all but one of the 15 hostages that had been taken to assure his loyalty were executed.

The hill on which the tower stands was once used as the location for part of the chain of defensive beacons which stretched along the border lands to warn of English invasion. The new Lord Herries built this tower on the spot using stones from the ruin of nearby Trailtrow Chapel. Standing not only as a defensive structure the tower would serve as a monument to the hostages who died and as a memorial that showed his personal remorse.

Later the estates passed into the hands of the Murray family and a small graveyard sprung up around the tower. John Murray, who's family owned lands nearby travelled to America in the 18th century and returned with a young black slave called Moses. As time went on the slave become a close friend of Murray and took on his surname. No longer a slave but a free man he was given the honour of being buried in the family graveyard as an everlasting symbol of their friendship.

The Gordons at Otterburn

By Donald Cuthill

On the 5th of August, 1388, the Battle of Otterburn took place. This was a skirmish between Scotland's James, 2nd Earl of Douglas, and England's Henry "Hotspur" Percy, the son of the Earl of Northumberland. This battle was part of continuous Anglo-Scottish border conflicts that were quite common at the time. It was a decisive Scottish victory, but was also a relatively bloody affair, with thousands of casualties, mainly on the English side.

Since it was a border fight, many of the lowland clans fought along with the Earl of Douglas. Some of these families included Clan Lindsay, Clan Johnstone, Clan Montgomery, Clan Graham, and Clan Gordon. Since it was such a decisive and famous victory several ballads were written about it, including a ballad called The Battle of Otterburn.

In the ballad a number of the families get mention, including the Gordons on a couple of occasions.

The ballad begins:

It fell about the Lammas tide

When the muir men win their hay,

The doughty Earl of Douglas rode

Into England to catch a prey.

It then continues to mention some of the clans there:

He chose the Gordons and the Graemes,

With them the Lindsays light and gay -

Later on in the ballad it goes on to claim that the Scots proved to have been quite blood thirsty, particularly the Gordons, and slayed a lot of their enemy.

The moon was clear, the day drew near,

The spears in flinders flew,

But mony a gallant Englishman

Ere day the Scotsmen slew.

The Gordons good in English blood

They steeped their hose and shoon.

There were also a number of Scottish casualties too, including, unfortunately for the Gordons, their leader, and father of Sir Adam Gordon, who also went on to give his life for his country.

Clan MacFie and the Selkie

By Amanda Moffet

The origins of Clan MacFie/MacPhee and all its name variations are said to be descended from a Selkie or seal woman.

Selkies are a mythical people who can change from human form to seal form with the aid of a detachable skin. These skins are individual and only can be used by the person who owns them. If a selkie loses her skin, she is forced to remain in human form until she finds the skin again. The skins, however, are known to be enchanted and will find their way back to their owner no matter how long it takes. Selkies are found along the coasts of Scotland, Ireland, Britain, and in some parts of Norway and Iceland. When in seal form, the Selkies look like an ordinary seal, but when in human form the Selkies are usually dark skinned, with dark hair and beautiful dark eyes. Human Selkies are quite shy and sing beautifully. Some say a Selkie in human form will be surrounded by a faint glow, which only increases their attractiveness.

While one such selkie was in her beautiful human form, her skin of seal, she married the first MacFie, who hid her fur so she could not return to the sea.

The origin of Selkies isn't exactly clear. Some peoples believe that angels who fell to the earth became faeries if they landed on solid ground, and selkies if they fell in the sea. Others believe that Selkies are the souls of people drowned at sea who were being given a second chance at life as a shapeshifter.

Selkies often fall in love with humans and vice versa, but the relationship seldom ends happily. The pull of the sea is so strong that the selkie usually returns, leaving a heartbroken mortal behind, and sometimes the children of the pairing are left as well. A human male is able to force a selkie woman to stay with him as his wife if he can steal away her sealskin and hide it. Only by locating her skin can she return to the sea, and if she does indeed find it she always leaves the man, sometimes taking her children to the sea with her. If the husband was good to his wife, she will protect and assist him from the

sea, filling his pots with crab, warning him of storms, and ensuring good fishing for him. If a male selkie leaves his mortal wife for the sea, he will return to claim his children after 7 years, paying the mother for caring for the child and leaving her childless.

The children born of a union between a selkie and a human are known as "Sliocha nan Ron" meaning "children of the seals". They are known as the Roan, and some are capable of turning into a seal if they possess their seal skin. The child is born with this skin and often with webbed feet or hands and rough patches of skin on their head and body. Parents of Roan children usually take the skin and hide it from the child, giving it back when the child is old enough to understand their gift. Even today, entire families are thought to be the distant descendants of Selkies. One of these families is the clan Macfie of Scotland. The name Macfie is derived from an older version of the name "Macduffie" which is derived from the Gaelic term "MacDubhSithe" meaning "son of the dark fairy of elf". The legend claims that the first Macfie took a selkie as a bride.

The Falcon and the Ox-Yoke of Clan Hay

By Tom Moss

The origin of the Hay family, Earls of Errol, is said to date from the time of the Battle of Luncarty believed to have taken place in 971 A.D. The Danish were invading Scotland. The reigning sovereign was Kenneth III who, at the time of the event, was residing at Stirling.

The battle took place in Perthshire, where this story is set, a tale which has existed in Scottish oral legend.

When news reached Kenneth III that Danes had landed north of the River Esk in Angus informing him that they had pillaged, burned and murdered and that they were now en route to Perth. King Kenneth immediately set off, with his soldiers camping at Montcrieffe Hill on the way.

At Luncarty a fierce battle developed, both sides fought equally hard. At one point the ferocious Danes, broke up one of the groups of the Scots army, resulting in the survivors attempting to retreat in the confusion.

Nearby a countryman and his two sons, ploughing a field saw this happen, the father, commanded his sons to put a halt to this retreat. Armed with what they could find, an ox-yoke they barred the way of the fleeing men. He and his two sons forced them back into battle where they fought so well that the tables were turned and the Danes were left beaten.

The father requested to accompany the King to Perth where he was to be honoured for his contribution to the victory.

King Kenneth III commanded that a falcon be let off from Kinnoull Hill and that as far as it flew, the land would belong to the hero and his sons. The bird flew to a stone in St. Madoes Parish, still known as the Hawks Stone. The stone is now situated in a private garden. This took in some of the best land in the Carse of Gowrie, so overnight the

peasant had become a very rich and powerful man.

The Chiefs of the Hays carry their coat-of-arms three bloodstained shields representing the father and his two sons, the falcon, the ox-yoke and the supporters, two peasants, representing the two sons.

A most interesting aspect relating to the legend is the fact that in 1770 a Mr. Sandeman, who farmed at Denmarkfield, which is the farm now occupying the site of the Battle, decided to level some tumli (mounds of earth, especially ones marking the sites of ancient graves) to make a bleaching field. On proceeding, the bones of men and horses were found. A little distance off, beside a large stone, traditionally pointed out as the grave of a Danish King, a sword was uncovered. This would appear to prove that a battle had been fought, to say nothing of the name of the farm.

MacQueen's battle with the last Wolf

By Amanda Moffet

One of the visitors to our site has told us about a MacQueen legend. She found it on a microfiche taken from a book published in the about Clan MacQueen, which is now sadly out of print. There were a couple of Clan MacQueen legends in this book. One was a love story where a MacQueen ran off with a lass from a clan that was promised to a lad of another clan.

The other was about a wolf that had been ravaging in Clan Chattan area and finally killed a young MacKintosh lass. The Chief of Clan Chattan called the clan levies out to search. First the levies were to report for a gathering then a search strategy would be made. The MacQueen was on route to the gathering coming through a gap in the mountains, when he came upon a wolf. There the wolf attacked him, he was forced to kill the wolf or be killed himself. He severed the head and took it with him to the gathering. He was many hours late when he finally entered the gathering due to his encounter with the wolf. The gathered clan levies jeered him and the Clan Chattan Chief admonished the MacQueen. The MacQueen said not one word, reached into his ruck and pulled out the wolf's head in a flourish and tossed it at the chief's feet. The MacQueen turned and walked away and returned to his home.

As it happens, the book noted that this was the last recorded killing of a wolf on the Island of Alba and the MacQueen is supposedly credited with his kill. Pretty sad as the wolf's head is on the coat of arms for the MacQueen's.

The version I have read tells of hunter named MacQueen, of Pall-a-chrocin, on the river Findhorn, in 1743. MacQueen was a giant of a man, and renowned as a deer hunter. He died in 1797.

The land had become the hunting ground for a great black beast. The beast had already killed two children, and it was the Laird of MacIntosh who summoned a meeting to discuss what was to be done. The men arrived at the meeting except MacQueen. Eventually he arrived.

"What kept you?" asked MacIntosh sarcastically.

"I brought him for you", replied MacQueen, tossing out the severed head of the last wolf from under his plaid.

Clan Hay - The Legend of Luncarty

By Amanda Moffet

There are two ways to approach the origins of Clan Hay. The first is the Legend of Luncarty, which is an important Hay tradition, while the second is based on historical research, albeit that inconsistencies tend to occur after so many centuries. Hector Boece, the Scottish academic, wrote the first known account of the Luncarty legend in his *Scotorium Historia*, which was initially published in 1525, with a second edition being published posthumously in 1575. There are numerous versions of the legend that are based upon Boece's work but which include various embellishments. In contrast, George Buchanan's account in his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, published in 1582 and derived from Boece's work, omits any reference to the hawk's flight delineating the land grant. In 2010, Sutton published a hypertext edition, in both Latin and English, of Boece's 1575 edition of the *Historia*, thus providing ready access to his original account of the legend . The version of the legend quoted below is from John Burke (genealogist)'s "Peerage", 1832 edition .

"The traditional origin of the noble house of Hay is thus related:— In the reign of Kenneth III, anno 980, the Danes, who had invaded Scotland, having prevailed, at the battle of Luncarty, near Perth, were pursuing the flying Scots, from the field, when a countryman and his two sons appeared in a narrow pass, through which the vanquished were hurrying, and impeded for a moment their flight. "What," said the rustic, "had you rather be slaughtered by your merciless foes, than die honorably in the field; come, rally, rally!" and he headed the fugitives, brandishing his ploughshare, and crying out, that help was at hand: the Danes, believing that a fresh army was falling upon them, fled in confusion, and the Scots thus recovered the laurel which they had lost, and freed their country from servitude. The battle being won, the old man, afterwards known by the name of Hay, was brought to the king, who, assembling a parliament at Scone, gave to the said Hay and his sons, as a just reward for their valor, so much land on the river Tay, in the district of Gowrie, as a falcon from a man's hand flew over till it settled; which being six miles in length, was afterwards called Errol; and the king being desirous to elevate Hay and his sons from their humble rank in life, to the order of nobility, his majesty assigned them a coat of arms, which was argent, three escutcheons, gules, to intimate that the father and two sons had been the three fortunate shields of Scotland."

The reliability of the legend has often been challenged. For instance, the Scottish historian John Hill Burton strongly suspected the battle of Luncarty to be an invention of Hector Boece, and Sir James Balfour Paul, noting that armorial bearings did not occur in Scotland till long after 980 (when the battle is said to have taken place), referred to Hector Boece as "an incorrigible old liar" in this and other stories. Cosmo Innes, further noting that surnames did not occur in Scotland till long after 980, states that the name Hay has as origin a place name in Normandy. .

Tales from Dalzell House

By Amanda Moffet

The Green Lady

"A long time ago, a lonely lady lived in luxurious seclusion pining for a lost love. She spent her days among silks and satins, sighing softly as she sat before her mirror, her pale sad face gazing into its glassy depths. One day, as she stared unseeing, a cool breeze from the open window made her shiver. She pulled her robe closer around her shoulders, the pale green Chinese silk rustling and shimmering in the wan sunlight. Desolation swept over her and she glanced yet again at the small dark bottle that nestled innocently among the elegant perfume flasks on her dresser. She reached out with trembling fingers, the sleeve of her robe brushing against one of the tall flasks. It fell unnoticed to the floor, the heady scent of oriental perfume filling the air as she raised the tiny bottle to her lips..."

This could be the story behind the mystery of the Green Lady of Dalzell House? Could she have committed suicide? Perhaps she was murdered? Those who have encountered her have yet to discover her secret. And there have been many, among them a terrified schoolboy who babbled about 'a green lady with bloodshot eyes' floating towards him out of the paneling in the Pipers' Gallery. Then there were the security guards who saw flashing lights, and heard the floorboards creak and the sound of footsteps. Their dogs barked into seemingly empty rooms and refused to cross the threshold. But one thing is sure... the Green Lady's bedroom fills with the scent of a heady oriental perfume.

Dalzell House and the Covenanters' Oak

The very sight of Dalzell House, now within the grounds of Dalzell Country Park, Motherwell, almost guarantees at least one ghostly inhabitant. The oldest part, the central peel tower, was built in the 15th century and it has 17th and 19th century additions. Until 1952, it was the seat of the Hamiltons of Dalzell, and as such had a turbulent and colourful history. During the persecution of Scottish Presbyterians - the Covenanters - in the 17th century, the grounds of Dalzell House

provided a safe shelter for 'conventicles', open-air religious services. The Hamiltons were sympathetic to the Covenanters' cause, and a huge oak about 50 metres from the house (see photo) is known as the Covenanters' Oak. It is thought that, even at the time when it was spreading its protective branches over the Covenanting minister and his flock, it was already over 500 years old. Less than a century later it was to witness Bonnie Prince Charlie's army in retreat from Derby in 1745, looting the parish as it passed through.

The White Lady

It was during the 19th century that Dalzell House became a truly stately home, in keeping with the social status of the Hamilton family at that time. Royal visits were frequent, and shooting and fishing parties were the order of the day. This is the period that the White Lady is thought to come from - a serving girl or housemaid who, abandoned by her lover, and finding herself 'in the family way', threw herself off the battlements into the rocky gorge of the Whinney Burn. Perhaps some aristocratic conscience was pricked by her desperate act.

The Grey Lady

The Great War of 1914-18 brought a change to the house. The North wing was converted into a military hospital and was soon filled with convalescing soldiers. The House's third ghost, 'The Grey Lady of the Dalzells', haunts this wing, her grey appearance being the grey uniform of the army nurses of the time.

So the three ladies of Dalzell retain their secrets and, now that the house is now longer open to the public, they will probably continue to do so. But, if you should be in the grounds, listen for the sound of mocking ghostly laughter.

Iain Beag MacLachlan

By Amanda Moffet

Scottish tradition holds that a member of the MacLachlans of Kilbride travelled to Aberdeen to purchase cattle. While there, he fell in love with the daughter of the Duke of Gordon. The two lovers eloped and eventually settled down and built a home on the island of Seil. After a time, the MacLachlan, his wife, and their two small sons returned to Aberdeenshire to make peace with the Duke and Duchess. When the family reached the castle, the two bairns were sent ahead. Upon seeing the lads, the Duke and Duchess immediately recognized them as being the children of their daughter. The two families subsequently reconciled their differences.

When Iain Beag MacLachlan, a member of the MacLachlans of Coruanan, reached the age of ascension, he was reminded of his father's death and decided to seek revenge. Soon thereafter, Iain Beag began lurking near the Glen Nevis House. He managed to become friendly with one of MacSorlie's dairy-maids. Iain Beag arranged for this maid to give him a signal when Donald went to the sheiling for a drink of warm milk, something Donald frequently did. The MacLachlan, a noted archer, who was lying in wait for his enemy, let an arrow fly as Donald was drinking. The arrow split both the wooden vessel containing the milk and Donald's head.

Iain Beag MacLachlan then fled from his home and wandered throughout the Highlands and Isles for years in constant fear of being captured or slain by his enemies. He later returned to his homeland and attempted to steal a very fine unique gun from Angus McSorlie, the 7th of Glen Nevis (Donald MacSorlie's younger brother) which he had spied through an open window. Iain Beag was almost caught by Angus, escaping when Iain Beag managed to stab the Laird with his dirk. Iain Beag then escaped the house and was never heard of again.

You are still able to see the gun sought by Iain Beag in a museum by Glen Nevis.

Left Handed Clan Kerr and The Reverse Spiral Staircase

By Amanda Moffet

The use of spiral staircases in medieval castles served as clever defence systems. They were almost always built with the spiral in the same direction (clockwise, when looking up from the bottom) so that the defending swordsman, who would either be coming down the stairs or backing up in reverse, could freely swing his sword. Conversely, the attacking swordsman (ascending the stairs) would have his swing blocked by the wall.

This, of course, assumed that both attacker and defender were right-handed, which most were.

Left-handed swordsman, though rare, had the advantage of surprise when attacking out-in-the-open – they had fought (and trained against) more right-handed opponents than their adversary had fought left-handed opponents. Their attack when ascending standard spiral staircases was also not blocked by the wall.

The warlike Clan Kerr trained to use their weapons with their left hands. Scottish Poet James Hogg (1770-1835) wrote, in *The Raid of the Kerrs*:

But the Kerrs were aye the deadliest foes

That e'er to Englishmen were known

For they were all bred left handed men

And fence [defence] against them there was none

and Walter Laidlaw wrote, in *The Reprisal*:

So well the Kerrs their left-hands ply

The dead and dying round them lie

Legend has it that, to allow them to more easily defend Ferniehirst Castle – seat of the Clan Kerr – the staircase was built spiralling in the other direction.

Is this true? Certainly, the castle does feature a reverse spiral staircase, but a 1993 study found no increased incidence of left-handedness in Kerrs.

The Westford Knight

By Donald Cuthill

What is claimed as a carving on a glacial boulder in the town of Westford, in Massachusetts, USA, is argued to be proof that an expedition, led by Henry Sinclair, Earl of Orkney, landed on the North American continent almost 100 years before Christopher Columbus.

The 'carving' is subject to much speculation over its authenticity, but it is said to depict a Medieval knight with sword and shield who was a fallen member of Sinclair's party who travelled to the 'New World' in 1398.

The story goes that in early April 1398 Henry Sinclair set sail, heading west with a fleet of 13 small vessels; two of which were driven by oars. They made it across to North America by the start of June; sailing into Chedabucto Bay, and dropping anchor in what is modern-day Guysborough Harbour, Nova Scotia in Canada. The explorers interacted peacefully with the natives, and with one tribe in particular, the Míkmaq (or Micmac). Sinclair managed to persuade the Míkmaqs to act as a guide so his party could travel and explore around the area safely.

They stayed in Nova Scotia until the following spring when the explorers are said to have sailed south, landing in Massachusetts, just north of where the city of Boston now sits. It has been claimed that Sinclair and his party made such a positive impression on the Míkmaq of Nova Scotia, and that after they left, the tribe chose to remember the travellers by telling stories about them, passing them down through many generations, and that the legendary figure of Glooscap is, in fact, meant to represent Henry Sinclair.

In Massachusetts the group stayed with the natives, also getting along with them peacefully, before Sinclair took 100 of his men and headed west. Among the men was a knight, and loyal friend of Henry, called Sir James Gunn. Gunn was later to become known as the Westford Knight. Unfortunately for Sir James the name came about due to his death on the expedition and he was buried, with a large rock covering his grave, where the modern-day town of Westford now is. On the

stone an effigy of the Scottish knight was carved. It depicts Gunn with his sword and shield, and on the shield the Gunn family arms. After over 600 years the engraving is still said to be there on the stone, but is now very faint, and your imagination is needed to visualise it for the most part.

The tale of the Westford Knight is very much a part of Westford folklore, but the story itself is widely considered to be apocryphal. The 'facts' of the story are widely disputed by mainstream professional archaeologists and historians, who are under the general belief that the voyage never happened, and the carving is either much more recent than the 14th century or simply just a natural feature on the stone. Other reasons why the claim that Henry Sinclair reached the North American continent 94 years before Christopher Columbus is doubted include the lack of any physical evidence of the voyage and the new land, which Columbus did provide, plus there is no contemporary record of it at all. Also, it is stated that the rock, onto which the effigy of Sir James Gunn is carved, would most likely have been under almost a metre of earth at the time of the supposed visit, making it more than unlikely for it to have been used as a memorial.

Whatever the facts, it is not likely that anyone will know for absolute certainty whether or not Henry Sinclair made it to North America, and if the stone at Westford is actually a memorial to Sir James Gunn.

Kinmont Willie Armstrong

By Tom Moss

William Armstrong of Kinmont, a Scottish Border Reiver, was notorious for his raids into England. He was captured by the English in March 1596 contrary to the Border Law.

Kinmont was well prized by the English who had no answer to his constant raids into northern England. His organised forays south of the English Scottish Border Line, coupled with his contempt for English authority and its hapless attempts to curtail his reiving, had made him enemy number one to the Lord Scropes. They were members of the English aristocracy who, father and son, were Wardens of the English West March from 1561 to 1603.

Kinmont raided Tasset in Tynedale, Northumberland on more than one occasion and was party, in these particularly vicious forays, to the murder of many men. One of these raids was carried out in daylight, unusual in itself as the reivers usually operated at night, and contained over a thousand men from the valleys of southern Scotland. They returned to the Scottish Border valleys with thousands of sheep and cattle and left hopelessness and destitution in their wake.

The 'Day of Truce' at the Dayholme of Kershope.

In March 1596 a 'Day of Truce' was held near Kershopefoot on the Border of England and Scotland. It was a day purportedly to be held at monthly intervals in each of the East, Middle and West Marches of both countries; a day when felons were brought to the very Border Line to answer for their crimes in an open-air venue. Many men, both English and Scottish, were requested to attend the court and witness that the proceedings were both honourable and fair and upheld the principle and spirit of the Border Law. All who attended were granted safe conduct whilst the Truce lasted through the medium of the 'Assurance of the Truce'. Such a measure was necessary as both the Scots and English invited to attend as witnesses might, outside the Truce, be at Feud or deadly enemies of each other, the result of previous reiving or family disagreement. Many a man viewed his neighbor. of the day with suspicion, hatred or scorn.

Theft of cattle, sheep and 'insight', i.e. household and farming goods and tools, were the most common reasons for trial but murder, the result of constant feud and searing animosity against neighbor. or enemy from across the Border Line, was ever present. Murder was the inevitable outcome of the hatred that hardened in men's hearts. It mattered not a whit should such enmity concern a fellow countryman. The product of the Feud often encompassed many generations.

Kinmont Willie is Present at the Truce.

Kinmont Willie was called by the Keeper of Liddesdale, Walter Scott of Branhholme and Buccleuch, to attend the 'Day of Truce' at the Dayholme of Kershope to represent the Scots. The trials of the Border Reivers on the day went without incident and both Deputy Wardens, presidents of the proceedings, were satisfied that justice had been achieved. Just before sunset both English and Scottish parties began to make their way home. The safe conduct or 'Assurance' of the Truce was enshrined in Border Law and lasted until sun-up of the following day. Thereby all who had attended were confident that they could make their way home unmolested by erstwhile enemies who, on this occasion, were required to honour the Law.

Kinmont Willie is Captured by the English.

As Kinmont Willie rode down the Scottish bank of the river Liddel, he was seen by a party of English making their way home on the opposite side of the river, down the English bank. They could not resist the temptation of seeing the greatest Reiver of the age tantalisingly within their grasp. Safe conduct and 'Assurance' thrown to the wind, they turned and rode hard across the river Liddel and chased Kinmont down. He was bound and taken to Carlisle castle where he was imprisoned.

War of Words leads to Deadlock.

When Buccleuch, Keeper of Liddesdale, learned that Kinmont Willie was in prison as a result of being taken against the honour of the

'Assurance of the Truce', he was incandescent with rage. He took no time in writing to the English March Warden, Thomas Lord Scrope, demanding Kinmont's immediate release. Scrope, like his father Henry before him as Warden, so coveted the neck of the much vaunted Reiver that he refused to succumb to Buccleuch's forthright petitions. Rather he met the fury with measured indifference and cited more than one spurious reason why he would not comply. Even James VI of Scotland and Elizabeth I became embroiled in the acrimonious affair.

Eventually tiring of the impasse, Buccleuch resolved to breach the defences of Carlisle castle and rescue Kinmont. He was heartened by the fact that he would have inside help from members of the English garrison of the castle who had tired of Thomas Lord Scrope's dictatorial rule as well as aid from the premier English clan, the Grahams of Netherby and Mote.

A Small Rescue Party achieves its Aims.

On 13th April 1596 the rescue party led by Buccleuch and consisting mainly of Armstrongs, moved south through English territory to Carlisle. It was a horrendous night of heavy rain and thick cloud. They were adeptly aided by members of the Grahams who had been at odds with the Scropes for years.

The rescue was achieved with an ease that defied logic. A postern gate was opened from the inside by one of the friends of the English Carletons, another family who had vowed to see the end of Thomas Lord Scrope. Having previously been told exactly where Kinmont was warded, the five of the rescue party who entered the castle lost little time in freeing the great Scottish Reiver. The remainder of the rescue band were outside the castle walls banging on drums, blowing trumpets at a strident pitch and making such a discordant noise that the English garrison, already sheltering under coverlets from the veritable downpour, refused to stir. They thought there was an army outside the walls.

Kinmont was soon across the river Eden and heading north sheltered by his comrades in arms. He was to lie low in the valley of the Ewes, north of Langholm.

The Aftermath.

Elizabeth I was furious when she received the news of the rescue. How dare any Scot attack one of her premier Border fortresses when peace existed between the two countries? The diplomatic wrangle between various ambassadors and the two monarchs went on for over a year. Elizabeth demanded that Buccleuch be handed over to the English for punishment as he was the one who had orchestrated the affair. James VI, reluctant to upset his countrymen who to a man applauded Buccleuch's outrageous actions, refused to do so.

As was usual in the Borders of the times where a catalogue of crime superceded the event, the heat finally went out of the situation but not before the strained allegiance between England and Scotland was severely tested.

Kinmont Willie? He went on to reive for many another day and died in his bed about 1603.

The Maxwell Johnstone Feud

By Tom Moss

By 1593 the feud that had existed between the Maxwells and the Johnstones, the two most powerful families in south-west Scotland, was to reach its zenith. The feud was long-standing as it had existed for over a century.

Whilst the culmination of the feud would result in the Battle of Dryfe Sands which has already been well recorded in these articles, it is more than interesting to consider the events which would lead up to the battle, the biggest family 'set to' in British history.

The most powerful position in the Border Country during the turbulent times of the Border Reiver was that of March Warden. In the Scottish south-west it was a post which brought a spurious legality to the nefarious activities of the Maxwells and Johnstones who vied with each other for decades to rule supreme in the Scottish West March.

The role of Warden was consigned on a too frequent basis from one to the other of the great Border warlords, Maxwell and Johnstone with the result that the Scottish south-west experienced nothing but upheaval, death and mayhem.

At one time, when the King appointed a Johnstone, the Maxwell Laird told his clan and followers to ignore the dictates of the new Warden. At another a Johnstone laird died, it is said, heartbroken that yet again Maxwell was to take the role.

There are thus many recorded instances of the hatred that existed between the two families during the sixteenth century but none would compare with the events that unfolded from the stealing of 'ane black horse'.

In 1593 a small party of Johnstones, five in all, made their way to the head of Nithsdale in the twilight of a July evening, to the Crichton stronghold there, and stole a black mare from the stables. The theft

was witnessed by Lord Crichton and his followers who immediately pursued the Johnstone raiders.

Whilst four of the five Johnstones easily evaded pursuit, their trustworthy nags more than a match for the uneven and rocky ground which confronted them in their descent down the valley, one, known as the 'Galliard', not content with stealing the black mare, had determined to ride it home to Wamphrey in Annandale. He little knew that the fine looking beast was partially blind and that it would stumble and fret and be unsure of its footing as he spurred it into action to distance himself from the chase.

He was soon ridden down, bound to his horse, and conveyed to the nearest tree where he was hanged without any ceremony.

The other four Johnstones, hiding nearby, witness to the summary justice and now led by Willie of Kirkhill, vowed vengeance for the death of one of their own.

Within a short time, without informing their leader, James Johnstone of Dunsckellie, they had raided Crichton lands, burned farms and villages, stolen insight (household and farming gear) and murdered fifteen of the Crichton clansmen. The offenders then went into hiding, miles from their homelands of Wamphrey.

Lord Crichton, well aware of both the advantages and limitations of the Border Law, sought redress through advances to his March Warden John, Lord Maxwell.

Sir James Johnstone, holder of a special commission from the King for exacting justice among his own clan, vowed to try his recalcitrant kinsmen himself. He refused to hand them over to the Maxwells.

Though Maxwell had previously been keen to see an end to the Johnstones of Annandale, he was reluctant to act without due consideration of the amity that now existed between the two clans. Before the present trouble it seemed that their differences would be

resolved thus he called for time to seriously consider the matter.

Crichton was infuriated at the dalliance and journeyed to Edinburgh to petition the King, James VI. He well knew of James' penchant for prevarication, and seizing the issue with both hands, he advertised the crimes of the Johnstone clan in a novel way to the common folk of Edinburgh.

He spoke loudly and vehemently at the Mercat Cross, inviting the populace to listen to his plea for justice. Moreover, within his followers from Sanquar, were the wives and girl friends of the fifteen men who had been murdered in the Johnstone raids on his lands in reprisal for the hanging of the 'Galliard'. They brought out the blood-stained sarks (shirts) of the dead ones and paraded them up to the castle and back to Holyrood House. By the time they arrived there, many of the Edinburgh folk had joined the throng. All bayed for justice.

James VI was now quick to act and a proclamation at the Mercat Cross seemed to seal the fate of Sir James Johnstone. The King demanded that Johnstone hand himself over to Maxwell before trial in Edinburgh. Should he refuse to be taken then Maxwell was given a free hand to use what force he saw fit.

Matters took a new turn when the Lairds of Closeburn, Lag, Drumlanrig and the Crichtons offered to be bonded to Maxwell in 'manrent', in effect become his vassals. They were prepared to do this because, whilst outwardly throwing their force behind Maxwell and thus adding to his already almost omnipotent hold on the south-west of Scotland, they, themselves, wished to see an end to all the Johnstones of Annandale.

Maxwell signed the deeds of manrent yet was not happy with his decision.

It was all to come to a head and lead to the Battle of Dryfe Sands when the parchment detailing the agreement between Maxwell and the scheming Lairds was found by a kitchen maid. She could not read

but was entranced by the flowery writing and the magnificent colours used. Rather than burn it she took it to her uncle who recognised the name Johnstone on the parchment. Very soon it was in Sir James' hands.

The die was cast. The result - the humiliation of the Maxwells at the ensuing battle. The story was not to end with Dryfe Sands in 1593.

Fifteen years later in 1608, the son of the John, Lord Maxwell, who was to die at Dryfe Sands held out the hand of friendship to Sir James Johnstone, still at that time, head of the clan, and requested that the latter meet him to resolve their differences.

There were only four men present; Maxwell, Johnstone and a servant of each. The servants drew aside whilst Maxwell and Johnstone talked of how to overcome the animosity which presided over the two clans.

All of a sudden the two servants started to argue and Johnstone walked towards them to intervene in their differences. As he moved he had his back to Maxwell who pulled a pistol from beneath his cloak and shot Johnstone twice in the back. He fell dead.

Maxwell fled abroad. His crime was that of treason as the meeting had been convened under terms which ensured the safety of all present. In 1612 he made his way back to the north of Scotland but was recognised and reported by a near relative. He was be-headed in Edinburgh. Thus in the short space of twenty-five years, between 1587 and 1612, four of the clan leaders of the Maxwells and Johnstones were to die because of a clan feud which took a century to resolve

The MacKenzie Victory because of a washer-woman s Blunder

By Amanda Moffet

The ruins of Castle Strome sit in the picturesque headland which once formed part of the ancient earldom of Ross. It became the focus of Clan fighting due to it's strategic location between the lands of the MacDonalds of Glengarry and the MacKenzies of Kintail.

The castle was built in the early 15th Century and during the next two centuries the land surpassed too and fro between the rival clans according to the royal favour of the time, this intensified the bitterness between the MacDonalds and the MacKenzies and eventually spelt disaster for Strome Castle.

The year 1602 saw the castle under siege by the MacKenzies once again. After a long offensive the MacDonalds imprisoned in the castle for so long made two unfortunate blunders. According to an contemporary account some 'silly women' from the MacDonald Clan left the castle in order to draw water from the well, however they were so fearful and the light was so bad they made the disastrous mistake of pouring the water into the gun powder vat instead of the water barrel.

When the MacDonald men discovered this blunder they cursed the women loudly, but this made matters worst. A MacKenzie prisoner overheard the commotion in the castle and managed to escape back to his own camp telling his Clan Chief what had happened. Which prompted a final attack.

The MacDonalds knew they were facing a sure defeat, their only option was to surrender and to save their lives. Agreeing to this the MacKenzie Clan watched the MacDonalds leave they then blew up the castle. Strome Castle has remained in ruins to this day.

Duncan Campbell and the Ghost of his Brother

By Donald Cuthill

Major Duncan Campbell of Inverawe was fatally wounded at the Battle of Carillon in 1758 during the Seven Years' War. The night before the battle Campbell had a ghostly encounter with his dead foster-brother, and after that meeting he knew that the battle was going to kill him.

Years before Duncan Campbell was even in the army he was spending a quiet night in his Inverawe home when all of a sudden a frantic man rushed in to the house and ran over to touch the hearth, claiming sanctuary. Slightly perplexed by this sudden burst, Campbell asked the stranger what the problem was. The intruder explained that he had killed a man and needed somewhere to hide out. Duncan decided to give the killer the refuge that he so desperately wanted, and hid him in the upper part of the house. Not long after sending the new guest to the room a group of men turned up looking for the killer. The posse told Duncan, to his devastation, that the murder victim was in fact his own foster-brother. However, not wanting to breach the laws of Highland hospitality, Campbell decided to not give up his now very unwelcome guest to the group outside. But rather than keep the killer in his house, Campbell, in a form of compromise, sent the man off to hide in a cave on the remote Ben Cruachan.

That night, as the story goes, the spirit of Duncan's foster-brother appeared asking if he would give up his killer to receive the punishment he deserved. Duncan refused the ghost's request and opted to keep the murderer's whereabouts a secret. The next night the ghost appeared again, asking the same question and once again Campbell denied the request. The ghost of the foster-brother returned to Duncan again one last time the following night, but this time he did not ask for the killer to be given up. Instead all he said was goodbye, and that he would see him again at "Ticonderoga", which, at the time, meant nothing to Duncan.

The next day Duncan went up to the cave to bring some food to the murderer, but of course, he had fled, never to be seen again.

As the years passed Duncan Campbell thought less and less of that final night's visit and eventually completely forgot about it. Duncan went on to join the army, where he did well; rising through the ranks to the position of Major in the 42nd Regiment, the Black Watch. During the Seven Years' War Duncan's regiment was sent over to North America to fight the French for control of the colonies.

In the July of 1758 British troops, including the 42nd Regiment, under the command of General James Abercrombie, were sent to attack the heavily defended French fort at Carillon, or as it was known by the natives, Ticonderoga in the modern-day state of New York.

It was unknown to Campbell what the native name for the fort was, until after a final visit from the spirit of his foster-brother. Not long after seeing the ghost, Campbell promptly inquired about whether the word "Ticonderoga" meant anything to anyone. He was soon told that it was the name the natives gave for the area, and as soon as Duncan heard that he knew that he was soon to die.

The attack on Fort Carillon on the 8th of July, 1758 was a disaster for the British troops. General Abercrombie's tactics were severely criticised, and he was described as an "imbecile", a "coward", and even an "old woman" by contemporary and future writers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Abercrombie had a much larger force leading him to be overly confident, believing that it was going to be quick victory for the British, ignoring all of the strategic options that were open to him. Instead he chose to go for a full on frontal assault, which proved to have been one of the worst choices. The British soldiers flung themselves at the French defence, and were cut down by the score.

Abercrombie had plenty of opportunity to withdraw his men and regroup to change his tactics when he saw that his original plans were blatantly failing. Yet he decided to stick to his initial plans and continued with the assault.

The Black Watch regiment were eventually sent in to attack the French fort, and just like the men before them, they were fighting in

vain, and suffered heavy casualties.

Among the fallen was Duncan Campbell of Inverawe. He was severely wounded and, in fulfillment of the fate bestowed upon him by the ghost of his foster-brother, died ten days later from his injuries.

Legend has it that, on the afternoon of the attack, the clouds over Inverary Castle replicated the attack, showing the carnage and British loss.

For the Black Watch in particular this battle was disastrous. They saw the highest individual loss out of all the regiments fighting, with 300 men, including 8 officers killed. In fact, it wouldn't be until the First World War until the Black Watch would again witness such casualties in battle.

The Mermaid and the MacLarens

By Amanda Moffet

The Picts who once inhabited Strathearn, the mermaid to them was the "mother-spirit of their race", and she was represented by the sisters and daughters of kings. It was not uncommon to find some primitive societies have some form of matriarchy, and with the Picts, succession to king went through the female line rather than male. The mermaid was of great importance to the Picts, both before and after the introduction of Christianity. This is evident by the carvings on Pictish stones of a mirror and comb: the mermaid's sacred symbols, and, later on, the depiction of mermaids as heraldic supporters on the Arms of the Chief of Clan Labhran.

Stories of mythical creatures such as mermaids can be very enjoyable, but aren't taken seriously anymore, but for the clan MacLaren their existence stems from such a tale.

A mermaid lived many years ago, in an age that no man can remember. She lived in a loch in the very heart of Alba, where she was able to watch the beautiful sunrises over the top of Ben Vorlich, and then the beautiful sunsets as the sun descended behind the hills that lie between Strathearn and Lorn.

Legend has it that this mermaid met and fell in love with a human man, and from this love they bore the forbear of the MacLarens.

For many telling stories of their ancestors, if they struggled to remember the reality of an event then they wouldn't think twice about dipping into fantasy to finish off the tale.

Lady Rock and the One Bad Chief of the MacLeans

By Amanda Moffet

Lachlan Cattanach has been titled as the 'only bad chief of Clan MacLean'. Just outside the south-east corner of Pennygown chapel, near Salen on the Isle of Mull, there are two carved slabs lying on the ground. Apparently, these graves are of this chief and one of his wives. The two were reported to have taken part in witchcraft; burning live cats because their squalling was said to have summoned the devil, and he was obliged to follow their commands.

For this reason Lachlan Cattanach and his wife were not allowed to be buried within the chapel's grounds. However, the church, with its limitless compassion, allowed them to be buried at crossroads; with the cross design being the next best thing to Holy ground. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as a precaution, all witches were pinned down with a stake to heart to ensure that the community would never again be troubled by their evil. However, all of this is an aside.

Lachlan Cattanach was married to Katherine Campbell, daughter of Archibald Campbell, the 2nd Earl of Argyll. This marriage was a political convenience as it cemented the alliance between the MacLeans and the Campbells, but it was not, however, a success with stories of Katherine trying to poison her husband. As time passed by and she did not provide him with a son and an heir, Lachlan decided to murder her. He came to the conclusion that it would be a lot easier, and a lot less trouble to make his wife's death look like an accident, rather than carry out some conspicuous act around his estate, so he quietly arranged for his wife to be taken to a tidal reef just south of Lismore lighthouse, with the intention of her drowning at high tide.

Luckily for Katherine, before the water covered the rock some passing fishermen saw her and she was returned to land where she made her way to her family home. Meanwhile Lachlan, thinking his wife dead, had sorrowfully reported the "accident" to the Earl, and although lacking a body, he held a mock funeral, where he showed every sign of sorrow. He was shortly found out, and the Campbells soon took their revenge. In 1523 Lachlan was "dirked in bed" while on a visit to Edinburgh by Katherine's brother, Sir John Campbell of Cawdor. The rock on which Lady Katherine was marooned can be seen at low tide from Duart and is known as The Lady's Rock.

The Thompson's Curse

By Amanda Moffet

There's a very old, very little known tale connected with the Thompson Clan. Four brothers and five sisters lived on a beautiful bay in the island of Arran at Machrie. The sisters do not feature in this tale as they all lived very long lives.

The bay at Machrie was famous for its beauty, and has always been quite a tourist attraction. The family lived on a small farming homestead called 'Auchencar' situated at the north of the bay.

'Auchencar' has been lived in and worked as a farm by the Thompson family since the 1760s. Due to the land being so fertile the area has been farmed since the mid fifteenth century, at one point homing more than 30 farms in this one area.

The word 'Auchencar' means 'field of stones', because of the large ancient boulders that littered the site. One if these boulders still stands today, an imposing monolith on the landscape known as 'The Druid's Stone'.

These stones were locally called 'cists' which is an archeological term for a box-shaped burial chamber either made from a stone slab or hollowed out tree trunk. The area was believed to have been an ancient cemetery of some kind from the Pagan days. A time when White robed priests held the authority over the land citing themselves as mystical messengers.

According to records several of these 'cists' were removed during the ploughing of the fields in the late 1890s. The Thompson brothers wanted to make the most of their fertile land. An unusual method was used to remove these stones, they were blown up! Three of the Thompson brothers were involved in the explosions - Donald, John and Alex. The brothers were accompanied by two cousins, who helped clear the land.

An elderley man living in a nearby cottage reputed to have second site

angrily predicted that "These Thompsons will never have any luck because they are now cursed!". This of course became known as 'The Thompson's Curse'.

The two cousins emigrated to America, seeking out the riches of the new world. They ended up in Nevada where they found work in a mine. But the curse found them and an explosion down the mine resulted in both men being killed outright. The brother - Alex Thompson went off to sea, but alas a sailing accident caused him to lose both of his hands in 1904, he was only 24.

Locals whisper this tale, not liking to speak it out loud for fear the curse will find them.

Romantic Legends

The last collection of stories gather a few romantic stories from around Scotland, tragic tales of lost or forbidden loves. With so many romantic Scottish settings these last few stories echo the Scottish landscape.

Tragedy Rock - A sad tale from Mull

By Amanda Moffet

This tale is one of the saddest stories on Mull.

At the foot of the 1,000ft cliffs of Gribun stands Clach na Leannan, the Stone of the Courting Couple. The stone is just 50 yards inland from a road where it passes the first farm coming from Salen direction, with a windblown elder tree at the gable. This stretch of road on the south side of Lich na Keal can be extremely terrifying, with the overhanging cliffs on one side and a drop into the sea below. There are many occurrences of rock avalanches after heavy rain or a passing sheep dislodging a stone.

In about the year 1700, in the autumn, a young man named John, a local shepherd was betrothed to Rona, daughter of a local blacksmith. The couple had been fortunate in obtaining a small but cosy cot-house that stood on a piece of flat land at the foot of the cliffs of Gribun. Their new home was situated opposite where the wedding was taking place.

The wedding celebrations went on until dawn in the barn of an old farmhouse. A storm had been threatening all day and broke in the night, a great wind came roaring in from the sea accompanied by torrents of rain. As time went on, the newlyweds slipped out unnoticed and hurried over to their little home. With the noise of the storm, pipes and celebrations, no-one heard the dreadful sound in the night when a great outcrop split, and a huge section rolled down, coming to rest on and completely flattening the cot-house with the young couple inside.

There they lie to this day with just a few flowers springing up against the rock in their memory.

It is told on Mull how people remembered the ends of some of the rafters were still to be seen sticking out from the bolder up to 2 centuries later.

Fair Helen of Kirkconnel

By Tom Moss

On the western edge of the village of Eaglesfield in the Scottish Borders lies the ancient church and churchyard of Kirkconnel. There one can find the remains of a medieval church. It is tiny; probably the remnants of a much larger building have long disappeared: the stone, fine and ready cut, having found a better future than to lie unused when the parish of Kirkconnel was amalgamated with that of Kirkpatrick Fleming in about the year of 1610.

In the 16th century a tragedy of particular poignancy is said to have taken place very near to the churchyard.

On the hill to the east of the churchyard once stood a fine example of the Border Keep or Pele Tower which, in the days of the Border Reiver , dominated the landscape of the lands to north and south of the English Scottish Border. Here stood Bell Tower, alas no longer to be seen as its stone has followed that of the church and its wall to a more prosaic use .

Here lived Helen Irving. By all accounts she was a beautiful girl, much admired by the local lads. There were many suitors for her hand yet she loved but one by the name of Adam Fleming. All who loved her reluctantly accepted that her heart belonged elsewhere - all but one. Robert Bell of Blacket House felt spurned by Helen's rejections, especially as he was favoured by her family. They were hopeful that she would marry within her station: Robert Bell, from a family of prominence, heritage and financial security, fitted their aspirations of a worthy suitor for Helen's hand.

But Helen loved another.

She would meet the man she loved, Adam Fleming, in the twilight on Kirkconnel Lea or in the churchyard. Their meetings were brief, infrequent and full of the pledge of undying love. Helen was torn between love of her parents and their desires for her future, and the love she could not restrain for her manly and beautiful Adam. Love supersedes all bounds and though Helen was heart sore at the

subterfuge which she employed to meet with her heart's desire, she knew that Adam was the only man she would ever love. Many were the times she headed home after the brief passionate encounters with Adam, dull of pace in her walk to the Bell Tower, sorry that she deceived her parents, yet dreaming of a future where their happiness would reign.

Unbeknown to the two young lovers, they were watched. Robert Bell of Blacket House was insane with jealousy and determined to rid the world of his competitor for Helen's hand.

Accordingly one night he followed the two lovers to their secret assignation and waited, watched, profuse with an insane desire to confront his rival. He was armed with a gun which made his intentions clear. When he saw the young lovers embrace any caution he might have felt was thrown to the wind. He lost any reason and waited for the lovers to part so he could get a clear shot at Fleming. The opportunity eventually presented itself and he fired off the gun at his adversary.

The two lovers, Helen and Adam, instinct and that inherent make-up which warns of danger, were instantly aware of the ferocity of ill-feeling which confronted them. Helen threw herself in front of her lover and took the full volley of shot in her breast. She fell dead on the spot. The shot was meant for Adam.

Adam, riled beyond any reason, knowing that his dear Helen was dead, launched himself down the banks of the Kirtle Water where the murderer Bell was frantically trying to reload his gun. Before he had achieved this Adam was upon him, sword drawn. In his rage he cut Bell to pieces, hacked him to death. There was no sweetness in the insane revenge. All thoughts of Bell immediately dropped from his mind, the sight of his headless body meaningless in his grief, Adam ran back up the slope of the Kirtle's bank, cradled the head of his loved one in his arms, and sobbed until it felt as if his heart would break. He nursed his dead lover throughout the hours of darkness.

With the light there came some reason. Adam knew he would hang for the murder, that he had little alternative but to leave his home before he was apprehended. The deaths of Helen and Bell would not be easy

to explain should he stay and confront her parents. They were aware that Helen had feelings for Adam which superseded friendship. They had tried to discourage them, hoping their daughter would marry a man of better means to support her through life. Robert Bell was such a man, or so they thought. It would not take them long to reach the conclusion that Adam was responsible for such a heinous crime. The discovery of the corpse of their daughter and the mutilated body of Bell which had all the hall-marks of a fierce encounter with a man of strength and resolution born out of intense hatred, would immediately point to Adam Fleming, thought of initially as the spurned lover. Adam Fleming fled the spot, left the country and was not heard of again.

Initially accused of a double murder in his absence, the truth finally came out. Friends of Helen vouchsafed for the integrity of Adam, for his love for Helen. They told of the meetings in the churchyard and the jealousy of Bell.

A few years later a servant of the Bell Tower, visiting the churchyard, was shocked to find the prostrate body of a man lying atop Helen's simple grave stone. A quick inspection verified what he had thought as he approached the grave. The man was dead; he recognised the still handsome features of Adam Fleming who had lived at the Bell Tower some years before. He ran as swiftly as his old legs would carry him and informed the aged parents of Helen.

In due course Adam was buried next to Helen, a sign that her parents had forgiven the girl for her love of a man who had never forgotten her; a man who had proved after years on the Continent of Europe he had not forgotten his first and only love.

Afterword.

There is more than one version of the tragedy that led to the death of Fair Helen. In one Robert Bell escaped after he had murdered Helen and was pursued across Europe by Adam Fleming. He eventually caught up with Bell in the streets of Madrid and shot him dead. It was only then that he returned to Kirkconnel, and on seeing the grave of his lover, succumbed to grief at his loss, and died.

Sir Walter Scott, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, recorded the Ballad of Fair Helen in his 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border'.

It is a poignant reminder that the aggression and confrontation which was rife for centuries along the English Scottish Border did not erase the finer feelings of all who were trapped in its maelstrom of death and butchery.

I wish I were where Helen lies,

Night and day on me she cries;

O that I were where Helen lies,

On fair Kirconnell Lee.

Curst be the heart that thought the thought,

And curst the hand that fired the shot,

When in my arms burd Helen dropt, (maid)

And died to succour me!

O think na ye my heart was sair (sore)

When my love dropt down and spak nae mair! (spoke no more)

There did she swoon wi' meikle care, (with great care)

On fair Kirconnell Lee.

As I went down the water-side,

None but my foe to be my guide,

None but my foe to be my guide,

On fair Kirconnell Lee;

I lighted down my sword to draw,

I hacked him in pieces sma' (small)

I hacked him in pieces sma',

For her sake that died for me.

O Helen fair, beyond compare!

I'll make a garland of thy hair,

Shall bind my heart for evermair (evermore)

Until the day I die.

O that I were where Helen lies!

Night and day on me she cries;

Out of my bed she bids me rise,

Says 'Haste and come to me!' –

O Helen fair! O Helen chaste!

If I were with thee, I were blest,

Where thou lies low, and takes thy rest,

On fair Kirconnell Lee.

I wish my grave were growing green,

A winding-sheet drawn ower my e'en (eyes),

And I in Helen's arms lying,

On fair Kirconnell Lee.

I wish I were where Helen lies!

Night and day on me she cries;

And I am weary of the skies,

For her sake that died for me.

Until last weekend, it has been some years since I last visited Kirkconnel church yard. It is a wonderful place , replete with an ambience of former times, of centuries long past. To the romantic, with a knowledge of the story of Fair Helen, it is a place to stand, think and consider her fate and that of her lover, Adam Fleming, their love, and the rash impetuosity of a spurned lover.

Such feelings are naturally tempered with thoughts that the story, though based on fact, has clearly been embellished down the years. The romantic in me, whilst succumbing to the sadness of the story, still readily accepts that parts of it cannot be true.

Imagine my surprise then when I viewed the story board set in front of the graves that are the supposed resting places of Helen and Adam.

The last sentence runs as follows:-

'The romantic story of the Ballad might be an 18th century invention, and the association of the monuments in the churchyard is questionable'.

Britain is awash with political correctness. Do we really need to take it to the realms of romance, poetry, folk-lore and legend?

Please think about it!

The White Lady of Corstorphine

By Amanda Moffet

The Lords Forrester were a principal family in the Corstorphine area of Edinburgh. Their main home was Corstorphine Castle, a 14th century stronghold which, by the 18th century, was nothing but ruins, and today nothing of the castle remains but a 16th century dovecot.

Sometime during the 17th century, a James Forrester was laird at Corstorphine Castle. Forrester was a popular man, known for charm and affable nature. However, he was also known for his vices, and loose morals; most notably in regards to women and drink.

One of Forrester's lovers, and who, incidentally turned out to be his last, was Lady Christian Nimmo. Lady Christian was not only married, but was also the Laird's niece, so the affair was kept as discreet as possible.

James Forrester would usually meet his lovers at the dovecot on his grounds, and so, like normal, arranged to meet Lady Christian at their secret location. She arrived promptly, only to find no-one else around. The Lady waited for a bit, knowing full well that her lover would be at some local pub, and so sent a servant to find him.

James finally turned up drunk and in a very irritable and rude state. Inevitably a heated argument started. It is said that Forrester called Lady Christian a "whoor", making her so angry that she quickly pulled her lover's sword out of its sheath and killed him with it.

Lady Christian Nimmo was arrested, tried, and executed in 1679 for the murder of James Forrester.

At the trial the Lady claimed that the death was an accident and that she took the sword as an act of self defence, however this story was not believed and she was beheaded in Edinburgh.

On the day of the execution Lady Christian wore a snow-white hooded

gown, and it is said that she is still seen to this day, wearing the same gown, haunting the dovecot in Corstorphine and forced to carry the blood-stained sword for all eternity.

Acknowledgements

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